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SHEEP AND GOATS CARRYING . . . PACKS

IN NATURE'S GARDEN : :

BY C. H. DONALD, F.Z.S.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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THE MOUNTAINEER

HE first saw the light of day in a deep ravine, far from the haunts of man, from under an overhanging rock, where his mother had made for herself and him a soft couch of earth which she had scooped up with her sharp forefeet. It was an awful day on which to come into the world. A terrific gale tore through the trees on all sides, bending the feathery tops of the pines to breaking point; the rain came down in sheets, and vivid flashes of lightning were followed by terrifying peals of thunder, which reverberated among the cliffs and echoed and re-echoed in all their awe-inspiring wonder, as though each succeeding peal was intended to strike terror into the hearts of every living thing upon those mountain

ranges. The *tahr*, however, paid little heed to the elements, for were they not, one and all, accustomed to the storms that howl round their mountain fastnesses from babyhood?

Terrifying though it was to the little one, it was nothing to those more advanced in age, who had taken cover from many even worse during the winter months. The little mother sat immovable, shielding her newly born kid from the gale with her body, and occasionally licking him with her warm tongue.

A small herd of does with two young bucks took shelter from the rain and wind in a miniature cave in the cliffs a little further down, and the little mother had every confidence in the all-seeing eyes of the sentry and her own nose to give her timely warning of danger.

The storm passed almost as suddenly as it had come, and the herd left the cliffs to browse on the newly sprouting grasses among the trees in the ravine, but the mother *tahr* sat on with her kid, only leaving him for a few minutes to pick up a few mouthfuls which grew from the ledge of rock immediately below her. In a couple of days the little kid was able to

THEIR MOUNTAIN FASTNESSES

follow his mother and the rest of the herd into the grassy nooks around the cliffs, and for the first time saw a huge black and ungainly form waddling down the ravine from above, and could not take his eyes off the weird-looking thing. As he approached, the little mother, who had been watching him, gave a kind of sneeze, stamped her foot, and with a wag of her short tail made for the scrub which bordered the sides of the ravine. Small and inexperienced as he was, he yet knew that this was a signal for him to follow, and though not a bit frightened he hastened to obey, and with a clumsy leap into the air on tottering legs he raced after his mother. He could not understand why his mother alone had run away. The others still stood looking at the black beast which sauntered leisurely down the ravine, turning over a stone here or nibbling at a tuft of grass there, until he worked his way down to the bottom of the hill and was lost to view among the trees below. His mother told him that what he had seen was a black bear, and though grown-up *tahr* need have no fear of him, as they could easily get out of his way

should he think of attacking them, it behoved little kids, who were not strong enough on their legs to escape him, to keep clear of him, as he would not hesitate to make a dinner off one if he could catch him.

Before he was a week old he discovered that two other does had joined the herd, one with another kid just like himself, and the second with two, one of which was smaller than the other and seemed very weak on his hind legs. After staring at the new-comers for a bit he had an opportunity of passing within a couple of feet of the twins and could not resist the temptation to rub noses with one of them. Funnily enough, the twin appeared to have the same craving, and the two having rubbed noses and smelt each other all over, found in each other playfellows, and swore eternal friendship, or the equivalent of it, in *tahr* language. The twin suddenly skipped aside, bent his head and approached the other in a most menacing manner. The other met him with head bent, and the two heads met for a couple of seconds, then parted, and each suddenly swerved and skipped off to join their approving parents.

Life in the jungles was full of interest to the little ones, and as their legs grew stronger, which did not take long, the three kids followed their parents and the rest of the herd all over the mighty mountains. They did not often leave the security of their deep ravines, but on one occasion the voices of human beings drove them from the gorge over a bit of very rough and broken ground, where they could easily defeat any two-legged enemy, but on emerging beyond, much to the surprise of all, there was a terrific bang. None of the herd had either seen or scented danger, and the majority were inclined to ignore it. Deafening roars and crashes are not at all unfamiliar sounds in the haunts of the hardy mountaineers. Rocks come crashing down at all seasons of the year; great avalanches, carrying everything before them, and thunderous snow-slides are matters of daily occurrence.

This, however, was somewhat different, and the two mothers, ever mindful of their young, dashed over the cliff which they had just ascended, the kids following, and stood again to listen behind a great overhanging

boulder. The sounds of voices far below them were still audible, but nothing else disturbed the silence. Another bang followed after a few minutes, and a few seconds later one of the herd came tearing over the cliff at a breakneck pace, bounding from rock to rock and ledge to ledge with unerring aim. As she passed the rest she gave the signal "Fly," which never needs to be repeated, and the remainder followed her in her headlong career. Over the broken ground, across the face of an almost perpendicular cliff, and round the spur into a deep, grassy ravine (one of their favourite grazing grounds) they dashed pell-mell. Across it, through a belt of gnarled oaks, up a rugged spur which led up to what looked like a sheer wall of rock, where it seemed incredible that anything but a bird could find foothold. Without so much as a pause, the leader rushed straight at the precipice before her. One great leap took her on to a projecting ledge, and just touching it with her sharp, rubber-like hoofs she sprang lightly off at an angle on to another, and thence across a yawning rift in the face of the rock on to still another.

The herd followed close behind, the little kids making wonderful efforts to keep with their mothers.

The leader paused for a moment to see that all was clear in front, and then continued her headlong flight until some 500 feet of inaccessible cliff divided her from the trees below. Here she stopped and scanned carefully each rock and projection which might harbour an enemy. Satisfied that no danger lurked, she, for the first time, cast her eyes down to her smarting flank and saw a tiny trickle of crimson tinging the grey-brown hair.

The poacher's ball had just grazed the skin.

Scratches and cuts are nothing out of the common with the denizens of the jungle, and the result of the poacher's ball was not very much worse than many cuts she had received from a hidden prong while dashing through a bit of jungle. Fortunately, no harm had come to the little herd, but the episode had been worth six months of tuition to the little kids. They had not yet quite realized why this particular "bang" should be shunned any more than the many worse, as regards noise at any rate, that they were frequently hearing.

They had, however, heard human voices and had long since been warned by their mothers that human beings were to be always avoided, so associated the report of the gun with the voices and bore the combination in mind for future guidance.

They must learn by bitter experience, and the greater the number of similar adventures they pass through unscathed the wiser they become. Instinct is given credit for bringing wild animals through most of their dangers, but they would not go very far if that is all they had to depend on. How frequently are the lambs and kids of *burrhel* and *tahr* caught among the flocks of shepherds? If instinct guided them they would know that sheep and goats are to be avoided as much as the men who tend them, but only those are thus captured who have not had the chance of meeting the shepherds' flocks previously, so lack the experience, and when suddenly surrounded or left by their mothers they confidingly rush straight up to the first goat or sheep and, not infrequently, to the shepherd himself. Sea birds which build in colonies "far from the madding crowd" take not

the least notice of a human being, and will permit him to touch them, simply because it is something they do not know and which has never before done them any harm.

Soon the herd got over its fright and settled down to rest, a keen-eyed doe, alone, taking up a commanding position on a prominent ledge to keep watch and ward while the others rested.

This was a favourite retreat in time of danger, and each member of the little herd had carefully marked it down in its own mind in the event of future need. Above was a sheer wall of almost vertical cliff, with no visible exit or entrance, but the steepest cliff appears to be child's play to a *tahr*, provided the face of the rock has a rough surface and some slight projections at intervals on which their sharp feet can find room to lodge. The does had already discovered a couple of different ways to get down and up the cliff in the event of danger threatening from either side, or they would not have selected this as a stronghold.

Several months had passed since the kids first saw the light of day, and they were now

fine, sturdy specimens, capable of following their mothers over the most difficult ground and even of giving warning when danger threatened. Their education had not been neglected and they had learnt by bitter experience who were friends and who were enemies. Every day spent in the wilds is an education, and there is absolutely no end to the amount the little things had to learn. They had been accustomed to watch great big birds soaring on outstretched pinions all day and every day, and had even looked down on to the nests of the Himalayan griffon and the lammergeyer. They remembered, when they were still quite young, seeing the parent birds bringing food to the youngsters in the nest, and the tremendous amount of noise the latter made. Very shortly afterwards the youngsters themselves began to fly, but they had one and all been looked upon as neutrals, if not exactly friends, who would not interfere with the *tahr*, so how were the little kids to know that there was one immense bird who was by no means neutral and from whom they would be very wise to hide? It was late one afternoon that the awakening

came. One of the twins (it was almost impossible to tell one from the other now) had mounted a rock on the edge of the cliff and was challenging all and sundry to deprive him of his possession. A *tahr* suddenly gave the signal "Take cover." The little kid looked round for an instant to select his hiding-place before descending from the rock, and that instant settled his doom. There was a mighty "swish" of wings through the air, and the next moment the little kid felt something tearing through his neck and shoulders and an irresistible force hurled him off the rock over the perpendicular cliff.

The terrible hind talon of the golden eagle had torn through the thick skin of the neck, and the momentum of some 16 pounds, driven at the rate of nearly 3000 feet per minute, had sent the little kid hurtling through space, to be smashed to atoms among the jagged stones a thousand feet below. The eagle circled slowly round, marking carefully the spot in which the kid would land, and then joined by its mate the pair closed their wings and dropped gracefully down to

enjoy their evening meal. A lammergeyer had seen the tragedy from a long way off and soon arrived on the spot, and selecting a rock close by perched on it and waited patiently for the "monarchs" to finish their feast, when he would come down and clear away the choicest bones that were left.

This had, so far, been the only tragedy in the little herd, and though one of the hinds on one occasion had just missed being caught by a panther, she had escaped with a nasty fright, and all had been well.

The rains had long given place to autumn, and the clouds and drenching mists had been succeeded by cloudless blue skies and a cold nip in the morning air. Twice thunderstorms had come and left the entire countryside covered under a thin mantle of white snow. It was just after the second of these that the two remaining kids in the herd, for the first time, saw three great big fellows, not unlike their mothers, only much bigger and with a shock of long hair which descended from their necks to their knees. These were the buck *tahr*, which had gone high up the mountain side on the advent of spring, and

had now returned, at the call of love, to claim their little harems. During the whole of the first day they did not mix with the does, or rather, the does would have nothing to do with the bucks, and fled whenever the latter came near, and it was in reality two or three days before they browsed together. It was then that the kids discovered how horrid the bucks could be to each other, and one in particular was a regular bully and made for the other two on every possible occasion. How very different it was when two of them dashed at each other, with lowered heads, to the time when the kids engaged in mimic warfare!

The kids were now adorned with tiny knobs on their heads, and they had not thought them so very insignificant while they only had their mothers' in view to compare with, but now that the three bucks had arrived on the scene, they realized that it would be a long time before they could hope to develop such massive, though short, adornments. The immense strength and power of them was beyond belief. The two bucks would charge each other, and the horns would come

together with terrific force, making a sound like a pistol-shot. One, in particular, of the three bucks had a very bad time of it, and was always being chased away by the other two, and finally disappeared altogether, but the two larger ones remained. It was getting bitterly cold up in their summer haunts, and what was worse all the tender grasses, even in the shaded ravines, had withered, and the herd now had to go down to the lower valleys to browse. Here they frequently came across black bears, but even the kids had got too used to them to worry their heads much about them.

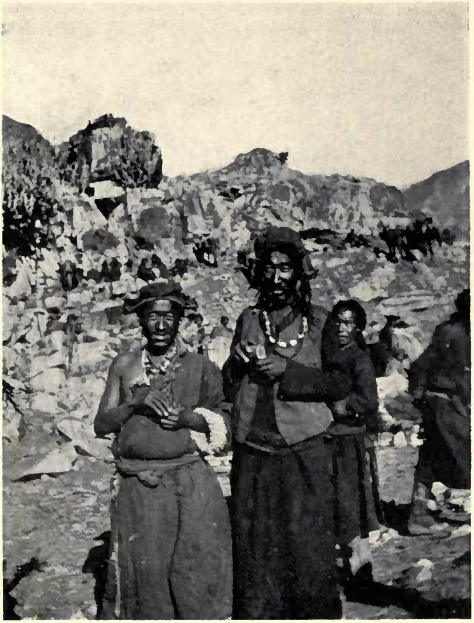
One night the sky had got suddenly overcast, and without any further warning snow began to fall in great big flakes throughout the night, and in the morning the kids found themselves up to their knees in soft snow, the moment they left the cover of their tree and went into the open. The does led the way and the whole herd made its way down to lower altitudes, nibbling at leaves and any small clumps of grass they came across on the way.

Below the belt of trees they came upon a

great expanse of bare hill-side covered with fairly tall grass, and at the extreme edge of this slope was a line of cliffs, among which grew small bushes and scrub. The grown-up members of the herd knew the place of old and had spent several winters here, but it was new ground to the kids and looked very different to their old summer haunts. At first they looked with awe at the mighty river, roaring between the cliffs which bordered it on either side, swollen by the late rain and melting snow, and though quite accustomed to the roaring and raging torrents which abounded in their summer haunts, this was something altogether different and equal to the whole lot put together. Across the river and just above it, on the other side, was a thin, white line along the hill-side running parallel to the river, the Hindustan-Thibet Road, and along it were to be seen unending lines of flocks of sheep and goats, carrying weird little packs on their backs. Every now and again a party of Thibetans or Spiti traders would pass along the road in their curious red flowing garments, driving before them shaggy little ponies carrying

enormous loads. Mules, donkeys, yaks, cattle, sheep-dogs, all wended their weary way down the road to more congenial climes, to the accompaniment of guttural shouts and imprecations and shrill whistles from the shepherds.

The kids gazed in wonderment at the ever-changing sights on the road, a couple of thousand feet below them, but as the elder members of the herd paid no heed to them, their first fear vanished, and soon they were busy browsing with the rest. The herd had gradually made its way in the direction of a tree-fringed ravine, where it intended to lie up for the day, when the leader suddenly stamped its foot and stood quite still, looking into the trees beyond. In an instant the entire herd was turned into a number of little statues. The leader alone had got a passing breeze which brought warning of danger, but the scent had passed as suddenly as it had come, and left the herd wondering at the reason of the leader's alarm signal. Noses, ears and scuts alone moved, but the scent had gone, and the leader cautiously moved a few steps forward.



SPITI TRADERS

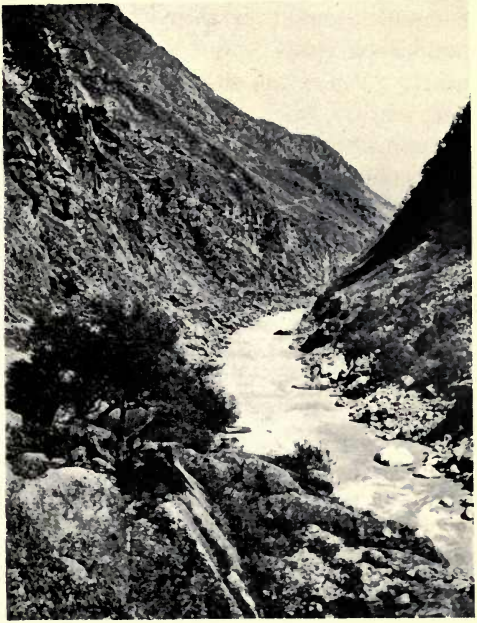
The breeze blew from below, and was fresh and pure, but the one little gust which had come from above had brought a distinct smell of an enemy, but too brief to give any definite idea of direction.

However, the warning had been communicated to every member of the herd and all were on the qui vive. One of the kids had found itself in a commanding position when the warning came, whence he had an uninterrupted view of the road below for nearly a mile of its length, and he could not resist just one more look at the curious moving objects below. The leader again advanced cautiously, gazing at every stone before her, her ears and nose open to every sound and scent. Suddenly and without any apparent reason she changed half-left, bounded up the hill and then as suddenly turned right and raced down in a succession of mighty bounds.

The whole herd followed suit, and the statues were now transformed into extremely animate forms dashing hither and thither, and even the kid, which had been otherwise engaged a moment before, had taken the

alarm and was fleeing for dear life from an unseen foe.

A silent, immovable form lay behind a rock not fifteen yards from the leader, who had nearly given it the chance for which it had long waited, when she bounded up the hill, but some protecting hand changed her course and saved her, when a fraction of a second divided her from certain death. There was nothing to be gained by sitting behind the rock now that the herd was thoroughly alarmed, and the panther—for that was the form behind the rock—made one bound forward, and selecting the nearest *tahr* as it dashed past, made a terrific rush at him. He had chosen well his hiding-place, for if the *tahr* browsed below him he would have them at his mercy, for some thirty feet below him was a sheer cliff of several hundred feet. The *tahr* saw both dangers, but cliffs were as often his friends as his foes, and he unhesitatingly selected a leap into eternity to escape the feline. In the instant while the panther made his rush, the rest of the herd took the opportunity to give him as wide a berth as possible, and making their way through the



THE WINTER HAUNTS OF TAHR

wooded ravine, found safety from present pursuit among the rocks and cliffs beyond.

The panther moved to the edge of the cliff over which the terrified *tahr* had vanished, and gazed intently down. A few stones dislodged by the falling body, where it had touched a projecting ledge in its headlong descent, could still be seen rolling down the hill where the precipice ended. A few minutes later a lammergeyer, circling on half-spread pinions, and getting gradually lower and lower towards the ground, alone marked the spot where now lay the *tahr*, and whither the feline would wend his way later.

THE CURSE OF THE JUNGLES

A BRILLIANT moon, only a day or two past the full, is just visible over the tree-tops in the west and casts fantastic shadows over the grassy glade. The glade itself is surrounded on all sides by a dense forest. On the farther side the great gnarled tree trunks can be distinctly seen, here and there, but on the near side it is as dark as Styx, from the edge of the trees to some distance into the clearing.

A tiny silver ribbon tells of a stream meandering between its sodden, grassy banks, almost bisecting the clearing, and a gentle rustling in the distance denotes its exit from the glade over a rocky bed among the trees. Not a breath stirs the leaves, and except for the streamlet not a sound disturbs the prevailing peace. Away in the east the stars become dimmer and dimmer and the clear sky the lighter, with every passing minute.

A tiny bat "swishes" past in pursuit of some insect and suddenly the silence is broken. "Pee-wit, pee-pee-wit, pee-pee pity he did it, pity he did it, pity pee-wit," comes the cry of the red-wattled lapwing as, disturbed from his slumbers by some prowling jackal or cat, he flies round shrieking anathemas at his unmindful enemy. A form glides into the clearing and assumes gigantic proportions as it approaches.

It is the shadow that first catches the eye as it stretches across some depression in the ground, but as it approaches, it evidently turns its head the least bit and the moon shines directly on its glistening white throat. One, two, three shadows are now visible, and a careful scrutiny to the left of the shadows reveals the existence of three undefined shapes. A further study of the shadows tells of long legs, extremely slim, as they are only visible, even in the shadow, when the beast moves, and an extraordinarily long neck with a curious twist in the middle of it, but a stone or a depression might account for it.

The dense shadow from the trees at last catches up the one cast by the animal, and

while you watch the whole glade is thrown into a deep gloom and the moon has sunk behind the hill. Every second and the darkness lightens, and within a few minutes of the moon having disappeared, stones and small tufts of grass in your immediate vicinity come into being, and very soon those undefined shapes are again seen, but instead of three there are now several. It is a herd of *cheetul* or spotted deer, which has spent the night in the crops beyond, or may, perhaps, have lain at the very edge of the clearing, whence the "sentry" could command the approach from every side, and has now ventured out to feed on the luscious young grasses before wending its way into the forest for the day. One fine old stag, who has seemingly already fed well, sits a little way off. A hind which has been looking intently into the trees beyond suddenly stamps her foot.

The two nearest to her take the alarm and follow her gaze, and one stamps a forefoot and wags her scut with much violence. A half-grown fawn throws up its head, gives a leap sideways and jerkily skips off to join its

mother. The stag stands up and also looks intently into the trees beyond, then as if satisfied turns and begins browsing.

A pair of jackals sneak out from the trees and the hinds watch them carefully, but the old stag pays no further heed, and the pair follow the course of the stream and disappear again into the trees.

A sow, with five squeakers, crosses the edge of the glade farthest from the deer, and almost at the same instant a delicate little shape rushes out in a succession of jumps whence the pigs have just disappeared and then turns round to have a last look at them. It is a mouse deer or chevrotain. He goes off again in another succession of hesitating jumps for a few yards, and then with head low he approaches the streamlet, drinks, and then slowly walks into the jungle.

From the distance comes the bark of a muntjac, but a very long way off, and though it probably tells of danger, it is sufficiently distant not to cause alarm. Jungle folk, however, take no risks, and though not actually alarmed it behoves one and all to be on their guard and take in every note of

that call. Once more the hinds are alert with ears working from front to rear, and noses twitching, to take in every sound and smell. The warning bark appears to be getting more distant and as it dies away the "sentry" alone is on the qui vive.

The "sentry" has given no alarm, and there is seemingly nothing to account for it, but as though each and all acted on some given signal, every head, except one which was facing in the opposite direction, is suddenly raised and even the stag is roused out of his meditation and stands erect, the very embodiment of grace and beauty.

It is evidently nothing very definite again, as the heads move from side to side and noses and ears are turned first one way and then another, as though not sure whence to expect danger.

A sharp shrill "bell" from one of the hinds and the whole herd dashes off at full speed. The stag bringing up the rear holds his neck straight out before him and his long antlers lie low along his back, so as not to impede him in thick jungle, and in an instant they are lost to sight and sound.

What can have caused such a scare? Unlikely that it is a feline, for had it been a tiger or a panther the whole herd would not have dashed off straight away, but having got windward of it and at some distance, perhaps with the whole length or breadth of the glade in between, would have watched it curiously and sent out "bell" upon "bell" to warn the other denizens of the forest, before finally making off. A feline might catch one, by stealth, in thick cover, but he is not even likely to attempt to do so, in the open, with the whole herd cognizant of its whereabouts. It is probably the scent of man approaching; but no, even that would not account for that terror-stricken "bell" followed by that hasty retreat. It must be—yes, it undoubtedly is, that arch fiend and devil, the enemy of the entire jungle, the "wild dog."

Except for a drongo making sallies into the clearing after insects and a pair of bul-buls swearing at a little owlet which had not gone to bed when it should have, there is not a sign of life anywhere, and five minutes must have elapsed since the *cheetul*

vanished into the forest, before a single reddish brown object appeared at the edge of the clearing, whence the deer had originally come. It stops for a second and sniffs the ground, its bushy tail held out at an angle of 45 degrees from its legs, i.e. neither out straight nor down. As he puts his nose to the ground he is joined by a second, then by a third, and eventually there are five of them. Sturdy, straight-limbed little devils that mean business and which nothing, except a rifle, can withstand. It is not a question of sniffing here and there or casting round for a fresh scent. They have followed it from goodness knows where, and this sudden interest in the ground, round the edge of the glade, is only to make sure whether the scent is stronger since they first took it up or not. Their noses tell them that it is infinitely stronger and therefore their prey is only just ahead, for what is five minutes, or two miles or so, to these relentless, untiring demons? The leader goes off at a long, low canter without a sound and is closely followed by the remainder, and as they pass within a few yards a sort of sniffing grunt is just

audible. It is not a growl, nor is it a bark, but just something between the two, very low and suppressed as though just sufficient to reach each other and to let each know that there is good hunting ahead and that all are keeping together.

A great snort followed by a mighty rush and crashing through brushwood proclaims the fact that the five have come on a cow bison with a calf, or may be a solitary bull, and she or he has taken alarm and fled. Further on still a muntjac barks and barks again, but the next bark is more faint and farther away. He has either seen or scented them ; but they are not concerned with any side issues now, and nothing will take them off the scent they originally took up, for if they were to go off after every beast that crossed their track they would have a fresh quarry to follow at every half-mile or so with little chance of tiring out anything except themselves. No, they must keep to one and one only, whatever else they may see or hear and however tempting that other might be.

Through the jungle and out into the open

beyond, flee the terror-stricken deer, instinct seemingly warning them that they are the pursued this time, and ever keeping the wind behind them when they know that their enemy is behind, however risky such a performance might ordinarily be, for now there is nothing to warn them of danger ahead.

The bark of the muntjac they have heard and guessed its purport, and they flee the faster. Along the edge of the village fields, across a deep stream they bound without the smallest hesitation, and once again are lost in the dense shadows of the forest. They steadily ascend the steep sides of a grassy hill, and, for the first time since they left the glade, the wary old mother hind comes to a halt to give her little son a breather. Every eye and every nose is turned in the direction whence they have just come, and each body is poised on limbs ready to leap off in any direction without the smallest delay.

From their present high position they can look down on to the flat country they have just come over, and as they watch they get a

glimpse of the enemy skirting the fields below. There is not a moment to be lost. There is no special note of alarm to warn the others, and there is no need for it. Every member of the little herd is on the watch, and all have seen those tiny specks hurrying along the edge of the fields. The old hind leads off with a wag of her scut, showing the white underpart as a signal to follow, to the others, and the whole herd dashes down the hill at incredible speed.

How those slender legs can bear the strain put upon them is a marvel, but confident in their own prowess not a single deer hesitates to follow the lead, and each and all dash down the hill regardless of holes and stones alike, and taking a fallen trunk of a tree or any other impediment that comes in the way in one bound. As they descend they realize that in this watershed the wind blows in a different direction to what it did on the other side of the hill and brings with it the scent of man, faint and from a distance, but still unmistakable. The leader swerves and changes her course half right and the remainder follow suit. There is not the slightest

check or doubt with regard to the new route, and each silently obeys the leader.

Once more the herd is on level ground, and as it speeds through a belt of long grass a sambhur stag moves forward. He had heard the cavalcade some time before and had seen the herd as it dashed down the hill-side, but had waited to see what tidings it brought before moving off himself. The *cheetul* make no sound or sign of any sort to the sambhur, but have still, in some wonderful way, conveyed to him the news that danger is at their heels. Was it the wag of a scut, or merely the fact that the *cheetul* were flying for dear life, that told the sambhur all he wished to know? With his nose to the wind and one frightened glance around he lumbered off, and gave the track of the *cheetul* a wide berth.

The little herd had decreased its pace somewhat and issued from the forest into an open stretch of country where a herd of village cattle were grazing, in charge of three or four small boys. The boys, seeing the deer, shouted and yelled at them, but this was nothing very new, and the herd merely

increased its pace, until it crossed the open space, and slowed down again when well into the scrub beyond. The fawn was beginning to show signs of distress, and even the old stag was none too fresh and would be glad of a rest. The long, springy canter gave place to a rising trot, and the old hind once more changed her course to head for a stream which was not far distant.

The pursuers, in the meantime, had not wavered for a second, except at the brook which the herd had jumped. Only for a couple of seconds were their noses at fault, then one swam across and dashed off into the jungle beyond, not even waiting to see whether the others would follow, for he knew they would. They had topped the crest of the hill, had crossed the sambhur's track and had finally made their way into the clearing where the cattle still grazed unconcernedly. A buffalo calf alone saw them go past, and the boys, at their play, only just got a glimpse as they disappeared into the scrub beyond.

The herd had stopped at the stream and each member of it felt the better for a cool,

refreshing drink. All the hinds, with ears cocked forward, kept their eyes glued in the direction whence they had just come, but the tired little fawn had sat down. Suddenly out of the scrub flew a peacock carrying three feet of magnificent tail behind him. "Hank kuk-kuk, kuk-meaw," said the old cock as he sat among the branches of a sal tree. Once more the *cheetul* take the alarm, and are off over the stream as fast as their tired legs can take them.

The indefatigable demons behind know that they are nearing their prey, as the scent is strong, and they hardly need to carry their noses near the ground. At the stream they stop, just touch the water with their tongues, give one or two laps, smell the spot where the fawn has lain, and once more the leader assumes that low, long canter, and in single file they cross the stream and disappear into the jungle beyond.

Another mile through scrub and forest and the dogs emerge into a wide clearing, interspersed here and there with trees and bushes, and on the further edge of this clearing they see their quarry for the first

time. The *cheetul* are all gathered in the shadows cast by some tall trees in a position which commands a view of the whole clearing, and having neither heard, seen nor smelt the pursuers for a long time, evidently were hoping that they had thrown them off their scent. Once again the jungle resounds with the "bell" of a hind, and the whole herd is again off. Nearly every one of them has got a glimpse of those hated forms, and without looking further they all dash off into the cover of the sheltering trees. This time two hinds have led off in different directions, in their anxiety to get away as fast as possible. The old mother with the fawn close at her heels is evidently the acknowledged leader, and the whole herd, with the exception of two hinds and the stag, follow her.

The hunters arrive at the point where two scents go off at different angles. Surely they will take the line over which the scent is strongest, i.e. where the greater number have gone, but they do not.

The leader does not even check, probably because the hind with the stag has taken the direct line they were originally following,

while the bigger herd has diverged from it, and he follows on the straight course. Three follow him and two pick up the other scent, but finding themselves alone they leave it before they have gone many yards and follow the others.

The *cheetul* stag is well-nigh spent, and knows that his bolt will be shot before he has gone another two miles or so, but he also knows the awful fate that awaits him should he so much as stumble now that the dogs are so near. He does not know what has become of the rest of the herd, nor whether the dogs are on his tracks or have followed the others, nor does he wait to find out. The two hinds are going away from him, and for the instant terror lends him wings, and with one terrific spurt he is up with them, but only to find that he is again dropping behind. His tongue now hangs out, parched and frothing near the lips, and the breath comes with difficulty. He comes out of the forest into another clearing just in time to see his wives bounding into the jungle on the far side, and the proud old head is once more held high and the grand old beast strains every

muscle to catch them up, but fails. Once across the clearing he stops and looks round, but nothing is to be seen.

The heaving sides tell their own tale, and those fine old antlers, the pride of his harem and the envy of every other stag within miles, now seem too heavy for his neck, and the head is lowered until the nose nearly touches the ground. The eyes, however, are open wide and detect the first signs of movement among the tree trunks. The head is thrown back suddenly, and in the terror of the moment fatigue is once again forgotten, and he vanishes into the jungle just as the leading dog enters the open.

The old stag feels he must drink at any cost, but where? The only water within miles is in a village tank, and that during the day is surrounded by human beings and cattle. It is, however, near, and he will see for himself as he passes whether there is a quiet corner at which he can slake his thirst. Even his pursuers are forgotten for the time, as he rushes madly on to the tank to get just one mouthful of cold water before his strength fails him. The edge of

the tank is reached, and, joy! there is not a soul near and only a couple of buffaloes wallow at the edge, a few yards further down. He dashes in up to his knees and begins to drink, and the water puts new life into his tired old bones. He lifts his head for a second, looks all round, and finding the coast clear begins to drink again, when his quick ear detects the sound of a breaking twig behind. One terrified glance backward and he plunges into the water before him and proceeds to swim for dear life. Two of the dogs plunge in after him, while the remaining three watch developments from the bank.

One of the wallowing buffaloes stands up, snorts, and tossing its head walks menacingly forward towards the nearest dog. The dog snarls and edges away, but the buffalo does not evidently like the scent and makes a determined rush at it. The dog again moves off to one side, showing a row of shining white teeth. The second buffalo seems interested in the proceedings, and joins the first, and the pair of them rush at the dog. The latter dodges between them and the very next instant is in the water, following in the

wake of the deer, while a crimson line trickles down one buffalo's hock where the little fiend had met his teeth. The stag, closely followed by two and finding his retreat cut off by the others on the bank, even if he could get round and past those nearest to him, makes for the opposite bank with not fifty yards to go and twenty between him and those merciless fangs behind. Can he do it? He is failing fast, and when still twenty yards from the bank he can hear the dog breathing behind him, and scarcely seven yards intervene. Suddenly out of the village rush a lot of half-naked devils armed with sticks who make straight for the point the old stag is heading for. In his terror at this fresh foe, he turns, but only to find himself confronted by an evil-looking head and sees half-way down the throat of his open-mouthed assailant. This danger is too near, and he again turns in the direction of the village, just as the dogs, alarmed by the men, turn in the opposite direction, and swim for the bank whence they came. As the old stag turns and plunges forward he feels the ground beneath him. The men rush in to finish him off, but

he still flounders along, turning slightly away from them.

The water gets more shallow, and he suddenly finds himself only up to his knees, and the next instant is well ahead, out of the water, and making for the forest beyond.

Seeing his weak condition, the men continue the chase, but fortunately for him the only cur with them has not seen, or will not see him, and the forest is reached in safety.

Having lost him, the men turn their attention to the dogs, which are making for the far bank, and have just reached half-way across the tank. A howling mob is soon rushing round to head them off, and is just in time. Two of the dogs have made good their escape, but three are soon surrounded, and within half an hour of their entering the water the jungles are rid of three of the most awful and virulent pests with which they are infested, and the old stag, after a hard-earned rest in the forest, goes in quest of his missing wives.

AERIAL ROBBERY

IT is one of those mornings in early spring, after a couple of days of torrential rain, just after the sun has driven away the damp mists which hang like a veil over the country. A cold, bracing breeze blows over the plain, and one revels in the grateful warmth of the sun. To the south, extending as far as the eye can reach, a long line of trees shows where the Grand Trunk Road lies, and to the north-east a similar row borders a district road, which stretches away in the direction of the far-distant hills. Farther up, to the east, the two roads meet, and at the apex of the triangle so formed is a dense forest preserve—the home of pigs, nilghai and jackals.

This forest extends very nearly from one road to the other, and forms a square block. It ends abruptly, and the line of trees on the Grand Trunk Road forms a perfect right-

angled triangle with the line of trees of the forest. To the west of the forest is an extensive plain, as also to the north. Patches of green fields lend a bit of colour to the prevailing limitless expanse of grey, sandy soil, and in the distance the ground slopes down to where numerous terns and other water-birds are circling over an expanse of water. Beyond the water the ground again rises gradually upwards and the whole country is intersected by innumerable lines of bushes and hedges, the boundaries of the village fields, until the whole is suddenly brought up by the old giants which line the district road on one side and the horizon on the other. As the sun rises, over the tree-tops comes into view a line of blue hills rising higher and ever higher until they, too, come to an end at the foot of the great white ranges now covered with fresh snow, which tower into space and look as though they were the solid walls supporting the blue sky above. With the exception of the view to the north and north-east there is nothing particularly lovely about this spot, yet taking it as a whole it has a fascination peculiarly its own. Over

the grey plain there suddenly settles a mirage, and a huge stretch of water, with trees and shrubs dotted about, comes into existence, and to enhance the effect a long line of camels crossing in front take unto themselves weird forms and shapes.

A flock of doves and some blue rock pigeons are feeding in the open near some fields, and two mynahs are looking for worms where the plough has freshly turned up the earth. A lark rises straight up into the sky, circles round a few times and descends again almost vertically. His song began as he rose and ceased the moment he alighted. A few tiny specks on the white water are probably teal, and a great big black mass on the very tip of a tree at the water's edge, which appears to have no head, is a Pallas' fish eagle. The body is silhouetted against the sky, but the head, being white, does not show up at this distance. He is a first-class robber, and as he sits his keen eyes are watching a pair of marsh harriers which are circling round and occasionally dropping into the weeds on the farther edge, as also the terns, in the event

of one of them finding a tit-bit which he would like for himself.

The sun has invited the larger birds of prey to leave their perches and soar, and several vultures can be seen rising into the clear, blue sky. A great grey shrike sits on the very tip of a small babul tree, and every now and again he flies down to pick up an insect in the field, always returning to his perch. Bulbuls appear to have a great deal to say in one of the trees on the Grand Trunk Road, and a king-crow can be seen rising at intervals above a tree and stooping with tremendous velocity into it again. A hawk or an owl has evidently taken up its position in one of the branches, and the king-crow means to have him out of it as soon as possible.

Suddenly the king-crow changes his tone and his antics and rises high into the air. The bulbuls change their chatter to a wild cry of alarm—"teet wootleeo, teet wootleeo." The shrike drops from the topmost branch and makes himself as small as possible near the trunk, and the mynahs fly helter-skelter into a very inadequate bush. The doves and

the pigeons alone seek the safety of the forest, which is some three hundred yards distant.

The reason for this commotion is soon apparent. From among the trees, whence the king-crow rose, two larger birds have flown. One has dropped to within a few feet of the ground while the other rises as it approaches, with fast-flapping wings, the white breast contrasting vividly against its dark grey wings. The bird near the ground approaches with tremendous speed until within a couple of feet of the bush, whither the mynahs had taken cover, when suddenly he shoots perpendicularly into the air for about fifty feet, turns, and once more drops like a stone almost into the bush, and only just clears the topmost branches. The ruse succeeds, and as he flies past the terrified mynahs emerge and make for the nearest tree. The old laggar tiercel has done his work well, and now leaves it to his spouse to finish it.

She has " waited on " above for this very contingency, and the mynahs are hardly out of the bush when she stoops with terrific

force and closed wings right down on to them. The mynahs—which were flying low and within a foot of the ground—zigzagged, and the one nearest the falcon, whether intentionally or otherwise, hit right up against a clod of earth just as the falcon was within striking distance. The result was most successful. The falcon missed and rose, and before she could turn the mynah was off in the opposite direction, but the tiercel was following in the tracks of the falcon and, seeing her miss, was well under weigh ere the mynah was off the ground. There seemed to be no chance of escape this time, but the miraculous again happened and once more the pursued and the pursuer were going in opposite directions. It was the laggar's turn again, and as the tiercel rose to his point, she came down like a flash of light. Again the mynah went to ground in a furrow, and again the falcon rose vertically, but before she could even turn the tiercel was down, and this time the poor mynah's fate was sealed, and it was borne off screaming in the tiercel's awful talons. The whole chase from beginning to end could not have taken

AN OLD LAGGAR TIERCEL

more than a minute, yet many eyes had watched it with interest.

This was not the kind of chance the fish eagle meant to lose, and before the mynah had actually been caught he was hurrying to the spot with all the speed at his command. The laggars saw their danger, and while the tiercel made for the trees with his burden, the falcon rose high, turned, and attacked the robber from above, but on he came. Again and again did the falcon stoop, and once she must have got claws well home as the fisherman swerved, and a few feathers floated in the breeze behind him, but he was not to be put off by such means.

Before he could catch up, however, another robber had arrived on the scene in the shape of a tawny eagle, who had come from the direction of the very trees whither the tiercel was heading, and so cut him off. Weighted as he was, the tiercel dodged the first stoop of the eagle, but as he turned and returned to the attack, the tiercel dropped his quarry, and the eagle picked it up before it touched the ground. Hardly had he got it safely into his talons when the fish eagle was up

with him. The tawny turned on his back to meet the aggressor, when the fish eagle's claw shot out and also got a grip of the mynah. The fisherman was by far the stronger and heavier bird, and proceeded to pull the tawny for a few yards, but the latter had no intention of parting so readily with the spoils, and the pair came fluttering to the ground.

Others were on their way to take part in the struggle for the tit-bit, and a second tawny arrived on the scene, but contented himself circling round the combatants without joining in. The next arrival was a steppe eagle, who sat down alongside and looked as though she meant business, but before she made up her mind there was a terrific "swish" of wings and a fine female imperial dropped from the heavens, and, without any hesitation, went straight into the mêlée. The tawny let go his hold almost immediately and flew off, but the fisherman hung on for a few seconds and then he, too, resigned himself to the inevitable and let go. He, however, did not fly, but merely walked off a few yards and turned round again to face the imperial.

In looks the two were very similar. Both

A TAWNY EAGLE

very nearly jet-black, with white heads and a white bar on each tail. The imperial stood a little higher and a few white feathers showed against the black on the upper portion of her back. Having got the bone of contention safely into her keeping, she raised herself to her full height, the lanceolate feathers on her nape and neck standing out straight in her anger, and gave vent to a succession of most unmusical and raucous calls. Where ten minutes ago there was not a sign of an eagle, with the exception of the fish eagle (which, however, can claim no relationship with the true eagles of the genus *Aquila*), there are now six of them, comprising no fewer than four separate species.

Three are sitting on the ground and the remaining three are circling around, yet each can easily be identified at a single glance. The size, the general black colouring and the white head alone are sufficient to identify the imperial. Another very dark-coloured, almost black bird, circling in a somewhat higher plane than the others, but smaller than the imperial, and lacking the white head, is the large spotted eagle. The one just

below the spotted, of a light brown colour with two very distinct white bars running along the whole length of his wing and parallel to each other, is a fine specimen of a steppe. Another, sitting on the ground, very different in colouring from the last, being almost a chocolate-brown on the breast, but showing the unmistakable bars, even on the outside of the closed wing, is also a steppe, while the one sitting on a log of wood and very like the light-coloured steppe eagle in general appearance, but without the bars on his wings and with obviously shorter legs than the steppe on the ground, is a tawny, as also is the one circling with the other two. Five minutes or so have passed, and yet the imperial makes no attempt to eat the bird in its claws. All it has done in the time is every now and again to raise its head and shout.

The fisherman, too, sits passively by, apparently not in the least interested in the proceedings. Two crows, seeing the conclave, come down to learn what it is all about; one sits close behind the imperial. The latter cannot trust him there, and yet is

A STEPPE EAGLE

apparently afraid to turn her back on the fisherman, so she turns her head right round, erects all her back and head feathers and looks aggressive. The crow hops away a few paces, but is not in the least awed by such grimaces.

This is getting monotonous, so I move towards them. The steppe and the tawny both fly off, but neither the imperial nor the fisherman stir, until I reach within thirty yards. The imperial still will not fly, though she struts forward a few paces holding the bird still in her claw. The fisherman eyes her intently, but has not budged. I approach to within twenty-five yards, and then the imperial, with one last look at the fisherman, runs forward a couple of paces and rises into the air. In a second the fisherman is after her, and this is evidently what he has long waited for. Being infinitely faster, he catches up to the imperial before she has gone very far, and attacks from above with much venom. The imperial half turns to receive him, but whether she loses her balance, or whether the fisherman strikes her I cannot see, but she goes to earth and the fisherman again sits beside her.

There is a slight depression in the ground where the imperial has fallen, and I can only just see her head, whereas the fisherman sits on higher ground and looks down on her. Two crows circle overhead and make half-hearted attempts to stoop at each of the eagles in turn. I again move forward, and this time the fisherman makes the move, but has a smack at the imperial as he passes.

I ran forward to see whether the fisherman would renew his attack when the imperial rose, but he did not, and what was more surprising was that there was nothing in the former's talons. I examined the spot where she had sat and two little breast feathers of the mynah were alone left to tell the tale. She must have swallowed the whole bird at one mouthful, as she came to the ground, or perhaps it was during this operation that the fisherman had his parting shot at her.

Such is life in the air. The weaker must ever give way to the stronger. The golden eagle alone dare eat his meal in the open, and may even let it drop from his talons to teach the young to stoop without any fear of other aerial robbers.

TURNING TABLES

THE day had been an eventful one, and M. and I had taken our easy chairs out into the veranda of the prehistoric bungalow we then occupied. The moon was only a day or two off the full, and shone out in all her glory from a cloudless sky, and a pleasant breeze blew down the hill, a forerunner of a pleasant night to come, instead of the sweltering ones which had been our lot for some little time past.

We had both taken four days' leave and had come out to this delectable spot where *shikaris* told us every kind of game could be had for the asking. Sambhur, we were told, roamed the wooded ravines, and were to be met with in herds round every corner; *cheetul*, with record antlers, visited the *ryots'* fields every night, and could be had at the expense of a mile walk, down the hill into the scrub jungle, which

the bungalow overlooked. Four-horned antelope abounded on the plateaux at no great distance, and even the mighty gaur paid occasional visits from the great sal forests some five miles away. As for tigers and panthers, their name was legion, and didn't every *ryot* in the adjoining village bemoan the loss of his best milch cows and buffaloes? It always is the very best animal that is taken, and I suppose always will be!

We had arrived the evening before, and as there was just time for a little stroll before it got dark we took our rifles and went over to a plateau a short way behind the bungalow. The *shikari* had not exaggerated about the four-horned antelopes, whatever else he had done, as we saw five within the first half-hour, but as bigger game might be at hand we refrained from shooting. At the head of a *nullah* which took off from the plateau we came upon numerous tracks of sambhur, and this place appeared to be a favourite haunt, and the plateau, probably, a playground. It all seemed most promising for the morrow, and

we returned to the bungalow in high spirits, in anticipation of some real good sport.

The *shikaris* were very keen on a succession of beats, but neither M. nor I cared about beating the jungle, and much preferred walking up our game, and if luck went against us it would be time enough to think about a beat on our last day.

We were up betimes the next morning, and had gone a considerable way up the hill without seeing anything or hearing a sound. We both had rope-soled boots and the two *shikaris* were barefooted, so the whole cavalcade moved pretty noiselessly. We were to go together up to the first plateau, and thence part company, when just before we reached the top, on turning a corner, a sounder of pig went off from under my very nose and gave me a frightful start.

On reaching the top M. went off to the north and I to the east, along the tops of two separate ridges. I had not gone 200 yards when I heard M.'s rifle speak, and as we had previously agreed to leave antelopes, muntjac and such small fry alone till later in the day, I thought it must be a sambhur that he had

had the luck to start the morning with. From the top of my ridge I beheld a sight that made me forget the object of my early visit and everything else for the time being. Straight ahead of me and below, as far as the eye could reach, was a vast sea of dark green tree-tops divided in two by a sandy stream bed, through the centre of which meandered a tiny streamlet. Over the tree-tops and far away on the horizon, low-lying clouds heralded the rising of the sun in a very riot of varying colours, in which reds and pinks predominated and changed from orange to lilac and purple higher up in the sky. Just over the top of the lowest line of cloud the sun peeped, a crescent of glorious flame, turning the little stream below into a riband of gold. It lasted but a few minutes, but was in itself worth rising early to see. Such a sunrise could only mean one thing, and that a terrific storm later on in the day, but we had no time to think of that now. So far I had not seen a single four-footed beast of any kind, though we had gone over two separate lots of fresh

sambhur tracks, and the diggings of an old sloth bear.

Arrived at the end of my spur, whence it dropped sharply into the plain below, we turned down one of the ravines and followed it until we came upon some more sambhur tracks, and as there was one which should be a good head, judging from the size of the footprint, we decided to follow them. There were only three deer, and the tracks were easy to follow and led us down the hill straight for the stream. Emerging from the jungle I went cautiously forward to the bank of the stream and scanned the somewhat open country beyond.

At first nothing met the eye, but after a few seconds' watching, a slight movement in the shadows beyond betrayed the presence of the deer. They had had a drink at the stream and were now engaged nibbling at some tender shoots before wending their way into cover for the day. Owing to the scattered scrub among the trees I could only just make out that they were sambhur, but whether shootable heads or not I could not tell. My glasses did not help me much,

but judging from the massive quarters I could make out of one beast, he gave hopes of a fine pair of antlers. They moved slowly forward and finally disappeared over some rising ground, without once letting us see their heads. We gave them a couple of minutes' start and followed, and after a long chase caught them up in an open glade, where they had stopped again to browse, only to find that not one of them had a head worth shooting. Two were quite young stags, and the big one had only just begun to grow his horns, and I was surprised to find him with the other two.

We changed our course and wended our way back to the spur we had followed in the morning, but instead of the top we kept along the bottom. A couple of langurs next attracted our attention.

We could see them across a small *nullah* as they sat high up on a tree and emitted their warning cry. "Chekau, haw-haw" grunted one old fellow. We watched them craning their necks to look at the ground below them and away from our direction. I hastily pushed forward, with one eye on the

langurs and the other on the stony ground before me. Every now and again the excitement among the langurs was intense, which probably meant that the feline (I had no doubt by now that either a tiger or a panther had caused the alarm) was moving forward, and each time they got a good view of him they told him what they thought of him. Arrived at the edge of the *nullah* I wriggled forward on my "tummy" and looked cautiously over a friendly boulder, and there, not eighty yards away, was a panther calmly looking in the direction of the langurs. Very carefully I brought my rifle to my shoulder, and as I was on the point of pulling the trigger I saw his head come down and his eyes fix on me. I had not so much as winked, so what had attracted his attention to me? However, there was no time to think, and I pulled the trigger, half fearing that my aim had moved, and as I fired I cursed myself for a fool.

He had been standing alongside a lot of boulders, and I had just got a glimpse of a forward movement, and hearing no roar made sure I had missed altogether. Being

a feline we made a detour and came round from above him, and there, to my joy, was the beast lying stone dead, not two yards from where he had stood when I fired.

I had made a very bad shot, but the gods were kind and had carried my ball a long way from where I had intended it to go but nevertheless had planted it securely in the throat of the beast, and I subsequently cut it out of the skin at the back of the neck.

We covered him up with leaves and earth and wended our way back to camp, whence the *shikari* would take back coolies for the carcase. M. arrived half an hour later in high good-humour, having accounted for a bear and a sambhur stag with a very fair head.

During our afternoon stroll we each picked up a four-horned antelope, so after dinner that night we talked over our day's adventures and forgot all about such things as hot nights and files, to which we would, only too soon, return.

The bungalow, as I have already said, was prehistoric. It contained two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a huge barn of a place to

do duty for a dining-room. The two bedrooms were exactly opposite to each other, and you went through an archway instead of a door from the dining to either of the bedrooms. The person who built it was determined that anybody occupying it should not escape a cold or a stiff neck, if through draughts had anything to say to them.

However, this was the hot weather, and we wanted all the fresh air and draughts we could get, so every door and window was open and we could see each other across the dining-room as we tumbled into bed.

"Roger," a fine upstanding cross between a bulldog and a bull terrier, with the muscle and pluck of both his parents, reposed under M.'s bed, fastened by a chain to a leg of the bed.

M. and I had smoked the last pipe of peace and with a last look at the lovely moon and a vain regret that we had not tied-up for a panther or a tiger on such a lovely night, we finally and reluctantly dragged our weary limbs to bed.

M. had done a rapid change and tumbled into bed, and I, being the last, went to put

out the lamp, which shed a dismal light in each of the bedrooms from the centre room. Just as I turned to make for my bed, something dashed past me, and the next instant there was a crash in M.'s room, followed by the most awful language from M.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "The Lord knows," said M., "but I am on the floor." I groped about for matches by the light of the moon, and again lit the lamp. We looked about for the cause, and found M.'s bed had only three legs, and where was "Roger"? He had been tied to the missing leg. Surely it was impossible, and yet, what was the thing that dashed past me as I put out the lamp? Anyway, poor Roger had gone without making a sound, and the chain and the leg of the bed had gone with him. It could only be a panther that would rush into a house, and without even waiting for us to get to sleep. The servants were roused up and a systematic search made all over the compound, but no sign of either dog, chain or leg of the bed. M.'s old cook it was who got a brilliant inspiration, and suggested sending for the elephant. "Elephant," we

both remarked in one breath. "What the devil is the elephant going to do?" "Master, please, the *mahout* he tell me that the elephant smell most awful, and he smell finding the dog." We had not thought of that, and anyway, there was no harm in trying "smell finding the dog," so the *mahout* and elephant were sent for. In the meantime every person there had some sort of theory to account for the missing dog. The cook's "matey," finding the cook's suggestion had found favour, saw no reason why he should be outdone, so began a story which had something to do with his grandmother, who had her toe bitten by a rat while she slept, but M. unfortunately was not in a mood for reminiscences, and cut him short by asking if he had sent for an elephant to search for the missing bit of toe!

The elephant finally arrived, and the *mahout*, full of importance, spoke to it in a language known only to *mahouts*, while we all followed in procession, like a Sunday-school class, behind. As soon as the elephant came near the veranda she struck the ground with her trunk, making a

curious hollow sound. The *mahout* announced that she had winded a tiger, and I began to feel small and uncomfortable when I thought how uncommonly near I had been to the brute. But for a tiger to rush into a house for a mere dog was something altogether new. The procession went round the house, and again the old elephant struck the ground and made the same sound. "Tiger," again muttered the *mahout*. Certainly the direction was correct, for the beast rushed in at the front door, and must have made his exit through M.'s bedroom door, and it was opposite these two places that the elephant "thumped." Some ten yards up the hill, behind the bungalow, was a clump of trees and here the old lady "thumped" again.

Passing under the tree the *mahout* shouted that the dog was in the tree. Wondering not a little we ran forward, and sure enough, there was poor old Roger firmly wedged in a fork of a tree and about seven feet off the ground. Not much doubt of the culprit now, as a panther often takes his kill into a tree, especially in jungles infested

by wild dogs. Luck was with us, as the tree was in plain view from M.'s bathroom window, as also from the cookroom, so we might yet avenge poor old Roger's untimely end.

Dismissing the elephant and the servants, M. took up a position in his bathroom and I in the kitchen, and patiently waited for the panther to come for his kill. The dog was in deep shadow, but the foot of the tree was bathed in moonlight, as also a good bit of the approach to it, except from the direction of the house.

Twenty minutes had probably gone before a silent form walked out from the bushes, and came boldly out into the moonlight and as quickly disappeared into a shady patch. "Had M. seen it," I wondered, "and would he shoot, or should I?" Slowly the panther came out of the patch, looked about him for a second, and then with long, low strides made straight for the kill. Just as he reached the bottom of the tree two rifle reports rang out almost simultaneously, and the brute stood up on his hind legs, and with a gurgle fell over backwards. "Don't fire again,

but be ready for the smallest movement," I shouted to M. We waited for five minutes, and as he did not stir I called to one of the servants to open a door and throw a stone at him. A pair of tongs landed within a foot of the brute, but elicited no response, so we came forward, with our rifles at the "ready," and found him stone dead.

The panther proved to be a fine specimen in the prime of life, and measured, between pegs, just over seven feet. There were two bullet holes in him—one in the chest, which must have been M.'s, as he was facing him, and the other just behind the left shoulder, so either should have accounted for him, and we could each claim an equal share in his death and skin. However, half a panther's skin did not appeal to either of us as much of a trophy, so up went a coin to decide the ownership, and M. won the toss. Poor old Roger was avenged, but not very greatly missed, as unlike either of his aristocratic parents he was morose and sullen-tempered, and cared for nothing on this earth save his dinner.

Sleep was out of the question, for a short

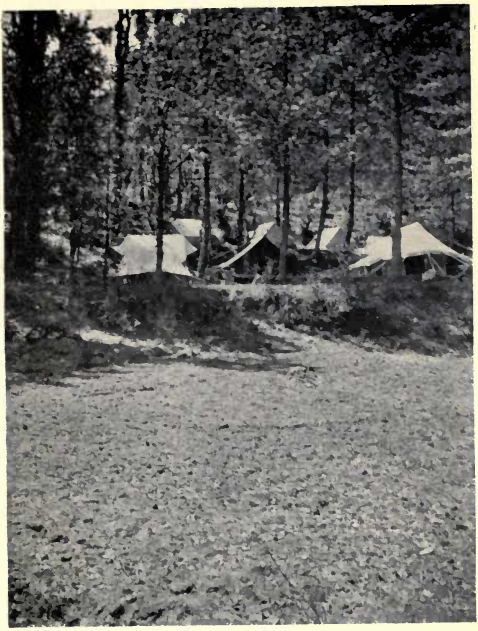
time at all events, so drinks were ordered, and we again sat out in the veranda to go over our day's doings. Two panthers, a bear, a sambhur and two four-horned antelopes, in something under eighteen hours, and that without a beat or a "tie-up," was nothing to be ashamed of.

During the two following days a fine *cheetul* stag, a mighty grey boar, and another bear were added to the bag, but neither "stripes" nor a gaur had put in an appearance, in spite of three buffalo calves which had been nightly tied-out for the former in various likely places. Every day and every hour of each day was very thoroughly enjoyed by us both, and even months afterwards, when M. and I met, we did some "smell-finding" on our own account and shot the old panther again and again, between the whiffs of our after-dinner cheroots.

NATURE'S GARDENS

A COLD bracing breeze blows down the valley, and the last lingering fleecy clouds are scudding across yon white-crested peaks, as the fast-rising sun smiles down, from a cloudless sky, on a joyous world beneath. The drenching rains of the tail-end of the monsoons are now things of the past, and the welcome rays of the sun have driven away the damp and gloom and brought into prominence the vivid greens of this sequestered spot.

A smoking mass of white tents tell of the heavy dews of the night before, and the tall, feathery tops of the giant pines around acknowledge the sway of some passing zephyr. Far down in the valley below the river roars over its rocky bed, still swollen after the heavy rains, and across it patches of brilliant crimson and pink on the otherwise green grassy hill-side mark the environments



TENTS AMONG THE FEATHERY PINES

of some distant village, of which these are the ripening fields of millet and buckwheat. From these patches of colour the eye wanders up the hill to a dark green grove of deodars, above which a blue column of smoke rises into space. Above this again there are other brilliant patches of reds and pinks right up to the very edge of a light blue-green forest of "kail" pine, which extends up the hill for about a thousand feet, whence the bluish tinge gives place to a deeper green, and this again is absorbed in a variety of shades varying from the deepest to the lightest of greens, as the deodar and spruce forests are followed by the line of broad-leaved species. Here and there an advanced virginian creeper is already turning yellow, and the birches under the snow-line are also assuming their autumn garb of brilliant yellows and reds.

Above these again, dark patches of juniper showing among the grey rocks lead up to the very edge of the glistening, fresh snows, which lose themselves in the few remaining clouds.

Looking up the river, a somewhat similar

panorama meets the eye, but on a still bigger scale. Great black valleys, where the sun has not yet reached, and serried ridges leading from the water's edge to the snow-line, give place to others and still others, until the whole of this mighty landscape appears to be rounded up by that all-embracing barrier of glistening white peaks, the giant sentinels of a mighty Empire.

The entire feathered world is out to greet the warmth of the sun, and the joy of living, in such an atmosphere and in such surroundings, is seen in every movement.

A pair of ubiquitous crows with a particularly belated family have installed themselves among the branches of a pine tree overlooking the kitchen tent, with an eye to the tit-bits which might come their way. Nay, tit-bits have already come, judging from one very wide-open beak, disclosing a very red throat, which frantically appeals in a succession of juvenile caws to a hard-hearted parent, who slowly and deliberately tears at something firmly held beneath his talons, and pays no heed to his young hopeful.

GIANT SENTINELS OF A MIGHTY EMPIRE

In time, the feathers are removed from the chicken's wing, at which the crow has been busy, and a small fragment of skin or meat is conveyed in the direction of the supplicant, who opens his beak still wider and shakes his entire head, whilst the wings quiver an accompaniment to the movement of the head in a very ecstasy of corvine delight at the prospect. "Caw cra craa caw cakakuk craaa," as the father pushes the tit-bit down, followed by half the beak, which nearly chokes the youngster. No. 2 now hops up alongside and the performance is again repeated, while mother crow has descended to a branch immediately above the kitchen door and is deep in the consideration of possibilities regarding the removal of a portion, if not the whole, of a loaf of bread which lies temptingly but safely behind a gauze frame.

The staccato notes of a Koklass pheasant ascend from the valley and all around is sound, of no great volume, but of infinite variety. A flock of little white-cheeked tits flit from twig to twig, peeping under the leaves and busily examining the bark of the tree and keeping up an incessant and merry

little chatter the while. A brilliant little speck of blue (the verditer flycatcher) rises into the air with fast-whirring wings, takes an insect in full flight and sails back on to the very topmost branch of an adjacent oak.

A rock thrush is busily engaged in beating a worm, which is trying to wriggle out of its mandibles, against a stone. First one side of the worm is beaten against the stone and then the other, until it would appear that nothing is left of it, but, as the bird again lifts its head, the wriggling thing is seen still winding itself round the beak. Another bout of knocking, if possible more violent than the last, a sudden upward movement of the head, and the worm flies into space, to be neatly caught as it descends and seems to go straight down the throat. For a few seconds the bird sits motionless as if dreading its reappearance. Finally satisfied that all is well, it spreads out its tail, bobs its head, and then flies on to a low bush, where it again spreads its tail, droops its wings, and in thorough enjoyment of the sun's rays gives vent to a succession of delightful trills.

A pair of spotted doves are busy running

hither and thither, picking up grain and seeds off a little winding path, and from the glade below the glorious mellow strains of sweet song ascend.

The song gets louder and the notes more continuous as the grey-winged ouzel pours forth his soul-stirring melody.

The barbet tries his best to drown every other sound by his ear-splitting, monotonous two-note cry, and certainly succeeds in making himself heard above every other sound.

A large family of minivets arrive and forthwith set to work to hunt for insects among the leaves of a chestnut, the brilliant scarlet and black dress of the cocks contrasting pleasantly with the green foliage and their yellow and more sombre wives.

Suddenly a white streak dashes past, and a song of four cheery notes tells of the advent of a cock paradise flycatcher, and a couple of long white streamers enable you to find him among the branches without difficulty. A glistening white breast and back and sides, varied with streaks of black, a shining black head and two feet of pure white

tail make him a conspicuous feature of all gardens and groves. One wonders how such a fragile little thing, and yet so conspicuous, can survive in the struggle for existence where many, much more robust, are protectively coloured. The female, it is true, is not nearly so conspicuous, with reddish back and tail and a black head, but she alone does not sit on the nest. The male takes his turn as well, making the tiny nest on which he sits a mark for all the marauding, egg-stealing gentry who pass his way. That arch-fiend, the jungle crow, frequently steals the eggs, yet the species is fairly abundant.

Two tiny specks far up in the heavens sail round and round in graceful curves, their broad wings and short, fanlike tails proclaiming them to be vultures, and the colouring of the wings and body, in which white and black are more or less evenly distributed, show them to be the Himalayan griffon. Farther up in the sky a single bird, circling in wide spirals, suddenly is seen to half close his wings and descend at an angle of 45 degrees for a considerable distance, passing the vultures, and, following the

direction he is taking, the eye discovers another bird of similar dimensions and shape, but absolutely different in colour. The long, narrow wings and wedge-shaped tail can be espied almost as far as the bird itself can be seen. These are the conspicuous sign-manual of the lammergeyer or bearded vulture. The one we have watched descending appears to have a white body and head, slightly washed with gold, whereas the one that has just come into view has a black head and body, and much darker wings than the other. The former is an old bird in his adult plumage, whereas the latter is a young female, and the somewhat patchy appearance of the head and body, the black being interspersed with whitish, particularly on the sides of the head and upper breast, tells you that she has undergone one moult, so is about sixteen to seventeen months old. The one we first saw comes down with a steady swoop of those half-closed wings until within a few feet from the female, when, just for an instant, the wings close a little more and then, just as you think there is going to be a collision, the wings open wide,

the tail spreads out, and for a fraction of a second the bird appears to stop dead in mid-air. At the same time the second bird, with a quick movement of the wings, turns over on her back and greets the aggressor with upturned claws. The first then passes on and the second turns over again and sails slowly on. Now, for the first time, the male is seen to flap those long, ample wings as he turns and makes another assault. The female, too, begins to flap, and each mighty flap takes her steadily higher, but the male seems to have the advantage in speed, and soon catches up. This time he is within a couple of feet of the other's tail, when the beats of the wings of the female increase in rapidity and force, and she rises almost vertically for a few feet, the male following behind, foot for foot, and the wings beating in unison, but the female wins and the male gives up the ascent within a few inches of her tail. Both appear to have reached the limit of their endurance and, simultaneously, each drops a few feet and then continues on a straight course for a short distance, and then the female's wings are seen to bend slightly

at first, but more and more until they are half closed, and she makes a bee-line for some cliffs across the valley. The male appears to be giving up the chase and begins to go off in a different direction, when he suddenly changes his mind and follows again with bent wings, his speed increasing as he goes. This time the female has a big start, and at first looked as though she meant to keep it, when suddenly those long wings opened to their full and she began to circle leisurely round. In an instant the male is up with her, and as she again turns over to meet the onslaught the claws of each interlock in those of the other, and the pair descend in spirals, describing catherine-wheels as they come. For a couple of hundred feet are they thus interlocked, when they suddenly part company and continue to circle round and round, ascending higher with each completed circle, until they top the mountain crest and are lost to view.

In the meantime what has happened to the little ones we left so happy in the trees around? The twittering has ceased, no flitting forms are seen among the branches,

and all is as silent and as still as though no bird ever existed. A spotted nutcracker, which had been busy among the pine cones, now gives you the clue for the sudden change. He leaves the pine tree and flies on to the very topmost bough of an adjacent oak, and begins to peer down into the foliage below, giving vent to a succession of raucous, crow-like notes in a somewhat higher key. A second one comes from a tree lower down and joins the first, and the two set to work to anathematise something as yet invisible to you. A little tit, safely perched in a thorny bush near you, suddenly takes up the alarm and swears in a very frenzy of hate. The tail spreads and contracts and the little mite, crest erected, sways this way and that, but the little black eye is never for a second off the tree on which the nutcrackers are sitting. A king-crow suddenly arrives from somewhere, and without hesitation or doubt joins the nutcrackers and, after peering about for a few seconds, gives his note of alarm, which tells you definitely that the intruder is a hawk of some sort, and one that is held in awe by all the small birds.

Mother crow also leaves her offsprings and flies into the oak tree and edges along the branch she first settled on. She then hops down on to the next one beneath and sidles along that for a few steps and gives vent to two "caws" and puts her head on one side and looks down straight below her. You follow the line, but can see nothing.

Suddenly the king-crow leaves its perch, dashes through the branches at a tremendous speed, with wonderful confidence in his powers of flight, and when half-way down suddenly rises up again, coming out from the other side of the tree. You look at the point whence the headlong dive was changed into a sudden rise and there, sure enough, is a little grey thing about the size of a dove. Your glasses discover two bright yellow eyes and a spotted breast and the long thin legs of a sparrow-hawk. By this time every bird in the place has taken up the chorus, and the sounds are as piercing and frightened in tone as they had been mellow and contented only ten minutes previously. The more timid ones had left for pleasanter quarters, and those who had found a safe

hedge, whence they could abuse their arch-enemy with impunity, were all busy telling him what they thought of him. It is easy to see that the hawk had fed well only a short time ago, so is not likely to interfere with any of them, but the little ones are taking no risks. The crow, however, is desirous of making a closer acquaintance, and has hopped on to the branch immediately above the hawk, who sits quite unconcerned, but with one eye on the crow, whom he does not quite trust.

As he looks up, the crow sidles away, but is back again in the next second, and finally seeing his opportunity dashes down and has a whack at the hawk's head, but those keen eyes are not likely to be caught napping. He merely ducks his head, changes his position, and gives his tail a shake from side to side, and prepares to sit quietly and admire the view. He has now turned his back on you, and as he first ruffles and then smooths out his back feathers you find little patches of white showing where before it was all brown.

The king-crow and the nutcrackers are

not nearly so easily satisfied as was the crow who, having had her stoop at the hawk and missed, has flown off to join her family. The nutcrackers are indefatigable in their "hymn of hate," and the king-crow, a little more daring, if less noisy, selects a good line of flight through the branches and renews its attack. The sparrow-hawk, finding this no pleasant place for a nap after his big feed, decides to quit. Dropping silently from his perch, he flies low along the ground and the next second is hid from view round a spur.

Every little eye has been on the look-out and every voice hails the move with derision and relief.

Such is life in the feathered world. One instant it is all joy and sunshine and the very next a note of warning; the arrival of a silent grey-brown form, or worse still, a sudden tragedy in their midst, instils terror into the hearts of all; only to be absolutely forgotten the moment that hated presence is hid from view.

The little tit hops out of its bush, and flying into the very tree on which the hawk

had been resting, straightway begins looking for its breakfast among the leaves. The king-crow rises vertically into the air a few yards above the tree he was sitting on and returns to the self-same perch with a moth in its beak; the doves quit their hiding and are busy running hither and thither on the pathway. Flitting forms may be seen among the leaves of every tree which are once more full of joyous life, and the air with pleasant sounds and songs of gladness.

NIGHT WATCHES

NIGHT creeps slowly on; the hour is midnight. As a half moon rises over the distant hills, sending its silvery light through the trees and casting black shadows around you, a silent form glides by, not so much as stirring a leaf in its noiseless flight, and as it sits on a branch before you a pair of red orbs regard you solemnly for an instant, then again those soft wings are spread, and the possessor once more disappears into the darkness whence it came. It is the great horned owl, the night-hunter, on whose preserves you are poaching. Around the silence is awful, broken occasionally by a rustle in the leaves below you, as some small rodent hurries past. The very owls and night-jars are hushed into silence at this witching hour. A gunshot away in the distance—a villager protecting his crops from the raids of numerous enemies,

deer, pig and porcupine—breaks the spell, and the forest is once more alive with sounds. The "bell" of a *cheetul*, the bark of a muntjac, the shriek of the owlet, all take their turn, and then the steady trampling and breaking of twigs and branches, as a herd of bison, disturbed by the gunshot, leave the fields to seek safety in their jungle fastness, and once more a deep silence broods over all.

The moon is high in the heavens now, and a dull grey light in the east warns the denizens of the jungle to seek their lairs and quit the fields and the more open country. The silence is constantly broken now: anon the grating, sawing roar of the panther calling to his mate, warns such as it may concern to change their direction, and the deer, one and all, prick up their little ears, listening for a repetition, stamp their slim feet, wag their little tails, and disappear into the jungle in the opposite direction to that whence came the dreaded roar. The shrill crowing of the jungle-cock is next heard, and instantly taken up by others: the spur-fowl, the peacock, the drongo, and woodpecker each add their little mite, and the jungle is awake. A sounder

of pig rush below you with a lot of fuss and grunting, not satisfied with destroying some wretched *ryot's* crops, and seemingly still hungry, as one stops here to dig up a root with its ugly snout, while another carefully examines the roots of a small tree for any tender morsel that might be hidden there.

It has been a fruitless watch, and my eyes, now heavy with sleep, have not beheld the sight they have striven for all night, and I now sit, patiently waiting for my *shikari*, and my horse to carry me home and to bed. To spend a night over a salt-lick has ever been my ambition, and to see the various animals that frequent it, but this first night was distinctly a failure, as to the best of my knowledge not a living thing approached it. My *shikari* then said that I should go after there had been heavy rain, so arrangements were made accordingly, and I had not very long to wait; and little more than a fortnight later found me alone in my comfortable *machan*, a camp cot, turned upside down, screened by green leaves and fastened high up in the fork of a thickly foliaged tree.

I had gone early, with my dinner tied up in a handkerchief, a lovely clear night and a full moon to show me all that was to be seen. The atmosphere, after the rain, was laden with moisture, and the continual drip, drip among the leaves augmented the already chilly and damp feeling, but my canopy of leaves kept off the dew, and I was well supplied with rugs and blankets to keep out the cold, so having finished my simple meal, prepared to make myself comfortable and watch the night through if necessary. I had my trusty rifle beside me, but had no intention of using it unless a feline appeared on the scene, as I came out to see and not to shoot. Given a certain amount of comfort and not a cramped *machan* and insufficient clothing, there is a marvellous fascination in a night in the jungles, incomprehensible to those who have never experienced the sensation. Soon after the sun sinks below the horizon the noisy chatter of the little birds is hushed, and you find yourself alone. In that vast solitude a curious feeling takes possession of you. An indescribable feeling of awe, a vague sensation that you have no

business here and it is sacrilege for you to remain, and yet there is something undefinable, grand, that roots you to the spot. A dry leaf falling with a clatter to the ground jars on your ears; the distant hoot of an owl, which under ordinary circumstances you could hardly hear, now rings through you and sends a cold shiver down your back. Let the man who has never given a thought to the future and the great unknown sit for one night in a jungle alone, and he *will* think!

Apologizing for the digression, let us return to the subject in hand. The last of the drongos had given up chasing insects and retired to his perch; the little owlets had called to each other and gone off to the adjoining fields to hunt for their dinner, and nothing but an occasional glimpse of a night-jar, darting gracefully, silently, hither and thither, over the tree-tops, or the loud whir of a large bat tearing through the still air could be seen or heard. The moon was well above the tree-tops, and the smallest object near and around the salt-lick plainly visible. The lick itself was situated about 30 feet from the source of a little streamlet, the water

flowing within a couple of feet of it, and the stamping of hundreds of animals, both big and small, had made ruts on the edge of the streamlet in which the water lay of a light grey colour. A muntjac was the first to appear on the scene. He stood for a few minutes on the high banks above the lick, and having convinced himself that there was no danger about, stepped lightly and cautiously down the embankment and slaked his thirst in the saline water below. While he was yet drinking, a rustling in the leaves caught his quick ear, and with a couple of bounds he was on the bank again, ears cocked and eyes staring into the deep shadows beyond. A sudden loud bark nearly sent me off my *machan*, but there he still stood, only his ears moving up and down and his tail twitching spasmodically. A stamp of his foot, another bark closely followed by two shorter and less loud—more like coughs—but still he stood his ground. I, too, had heard the rustle, and instinctively gripped my rifle, and now and again there was a noise, but very much louder, as though something were being dragged along the ground, though

it only lasted for a fraction of a second. Another "Bhar-ha-ha," and the muntjac bounded lightly off and disappeared, but did not seem in any great hurry or particularly alarmed, so I put down my rifle again and waited. There again, scratch, scratch, scratch, and then a deep breath, like a terrier digging at a hole. A bear, I thought, getting to the bottom of an ant-heap, and so it proved to be, as about twenty minutes later I got a glimpse of it crossing the *nullah* some distance below me. All was still again now, and remained so for some minutes, and I was getting very drowsy, when looking up I saw a slight form standing where I had last seen the muntjac, and found I was looking at another one, a young male this time, with two thick knobs on his head. He seemed uneasy and moved on up the *nullah* without even waiting for a drink. A distant crashing and breaking of bamboos next followed, and as the sound came nearer you could hear heavy breathing and shuffling of many feet. This is what I had come to see, and, at last, were my eyes really to be gratified? Yes, on they came, and a few

minutes later I had the pleasure of looking down on to a herd of nine gaur—two young bulls, five cows, and two calves. The high withers and the more massive forms at once proclaimed the bulls, but there was one cow that was really bigger than either of the bulls, and I had to look at her hard before I decided that she was a cow. One might easily have taken her for a bull, seeing her with the others, but she lacked the hump, or rather, it was not nearly so well defined as in the bulls, and her neck appeared thin in comparison with her bulk—she looked a cow. One can very often see the difference oneself, but it would not be so easy to try and explain it to another. The horns were very deceptive things to go by in the moonlight. Safe in their enormous strength, they had no reason to approach with such caution, and yet they, too, stopped on the bank and had a good look before venturing down into the *nullah*. The big cow at last led the way, and was followed by two others and both the calves, the others remaining on the bank, some browsing on the tender shoots; one unconcernedly rubbed his neck against a tree, while

one of the bulls evidently stood on guard, motionless, except for his great ears, which flapped from side to side, open to every sound. Those below could be heard scraping their rough tongues against the side of the salt-lick. After a few minutes the bull who had been rubbing himself against the tree also went down, but rested content with a good drink and did not go near the salt-lick, and returned to the bank almost immediately, followed by the others. I expected to see the rest take their turn at the lick, but was surprised to see them loiter about the bank for a few minutes. Then the whole herd crossed over the *nullah*, and it, too, disappeared into the shadows beyond, as the little deer had done before them. A hare or a mouse-deer, I could not make out which, was the next item on the programme, but he kept in the shade and did not come near enough to let me get a look at him. The curious manner of moving—half a dozen quick steps or jumps, and then a stop—pointed to it being a hare, but I could not tell whether they were jumps or quick steps. I must have gone to sleep after the hare or mouse-

deer, as the case may have been, disappeared, as I was roused by what seemed to be a piercing yell, and a repetition as my eyes opened told me *cheetul* were about. I looked cautiously out of my peephole, and saw four hinds staring straight up at me, and then I discovered that my hand had strayed over the edge of my cot and some movement in it had attracted their attention. Without thinking, I hurriedly withdrew it, and off went the lot, now thoroughly alarmed. I felt I had been hours in my *machan*, and wondered at the moon still shining brightly on the salt-lick, and on looking at my watch saw it was only half-past nine. The last thing I remembered doing that night was to look at my watch and the next to wake up and find the dawn had broken and the moon out of sight. One thing I had noticed as strange. Neither the muntjac nor the gaur had taken any notice of our tracks ; they must have winded them, as they crossed over them, but if they did they paid no heed to them, or was that the cause of their uneasiness when approaching the lick, or does instinct warn them always to be on the alert in such

places? My *shikari* arrived shortly after the sun rose, and the first thing he did was to point to the pugs of a panther on the edge of the *nullah*, which had not been there the evening before. He must have come while I slept.

I reached home perfectly refreshed after my long sleep, and not cramped and chilled as is usually the lot of those who spend a night in the jungle, and glad that I had gone, though my *shikari* seemed sadly disappointed I had no bison lying below the tree to show for it. I had told him before I sat up that I had no intention of firing if I did see one, but in his heart of hearts he had hoped that the Sahib was only "talking," and would not resist the temptation to shoot when the animals appeared in sight. "Truly, 'Sahibs' are strange creatures!"

A MOUNTAIN STREAM

A CRYSTAL-CLEAR stream flows over its pebbly bed, the waters collecting in a great blue mass beneath a miniature cliff, and forming a pool some 100 yards long by 20 yards wide and anything up to 15 feet deep. Herein disport themselves countless little finny elves, flashing and glistening in the sun's rays.

In the deeper portion of the pool a shoal of mahasir might be seen swimming leisurely round a big boulder, as if playing at the game of "follow my leader," breaking off every now and again to cross and re-cross each other's line in a veritable dazzling maze.

A twig, falling into the water from an adjacent tree, sends them all capering off in different directions, only to reassemble again and continue the game. Far down in the depths a flash of shimmering white reveals

A SHOAL OF MAHASIR

the presence of a bottom-feeder as he turns over on his side the better to get at his food, while all along the shallow edges swarms of little fry rush hither and thither, and among them the tiny *barilius*, with its zebra-like stripes, may be seen gracefully flitting above the stones. A sudden flash and he has jumped clean out of the water and left a tiny ripple and a bubble to tell the tale of his exploit.

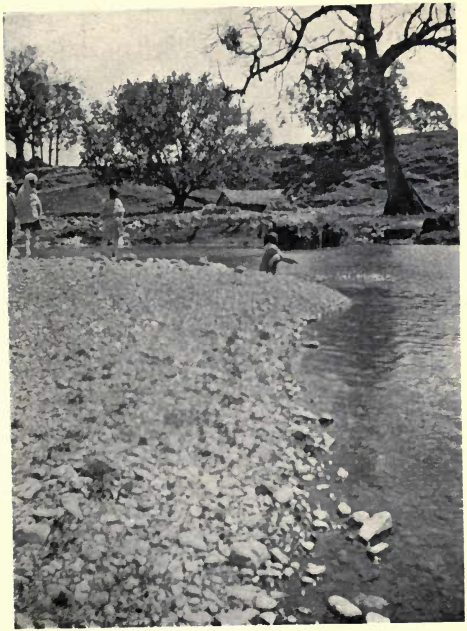
Danger lurks on every side for these little ones, and none knows whose turn it might be next to leave the pool. A silent form stalks along the bank with his long neck drawn well in and a sharp, spear-like beak ready poised to strike. A light grey-brown figure on which darker streaks of brown may be seen, at close range, the whole blending perfectly with the stones and weeds on the banks of the stream. A villager passing along the bank disturbs the marauder, and the brown form is transformed into a vision of snowy white as he spreads out his ample wings and with slow, deliberate flaps flies on to the opposite bank. The moment those wings are closed the white again gives

place to brown, and the "paddy-bird" resumes his silent search down the stream.

On a dry branch overlooking the pool a tiny wee speck of deep brown and white is seen. A bright red beak, about half as long as the bird, points down into the pool, and a pair of sharp, beady eyes take careful stock of the waters beneath. Suddenly, as if shot from a bow, the brown and white disappear and a dazzling little chimera in blue dashes past and disappears into the water with a slight splash, and before the ripples have receded a foot from the spot whence they originated, the little bird is out again with a small fish held crosswise in its beak, with which it flies to the nearest stone and proceeds to bang the life out of it.

A kite, seeing the capture, circles twice round as if about to stoop and snatch away its prey from the little kingfisher, then changes its mind and sails off up the stream, its forked tail turned over at an angle of 45 degrees as it changes its course.

Two white-necked storks are seen in a puddle a little farther down. One has



A DRY BRANCH OVERLOOKING A PLACID POOL

seemingly fed and is contentedly poised on one leg, the other tucked well under his body, attending to his breast feathers, his long neck curved round in almost a complete circle. The other strides solemnly along on the edge of the puddle, his snowy-white neck bobbing up and down from his black body at each step.

A white-capped redstart sits on a stone in the middle of the stream just where it enters the pool. Every now and again it will be seen to bob suddenly as though its legs were made of springs, spread out its chestnut tail like a fan, droop its wings and change its direction, facing at right angles to the position it occupied a few seconds previously. Suddenly with fast-vibrating wings it rises vertically from the stone after an insect passing by, catches it, and drops back on to the stone whence it rose.

A pied wagtail, which had been resting in the shade of a tussock of grass, suddenly espies a mole cricket which has had the temerity to leave its hole in broad daylight, and races after it, its tiny thin legs working at an incredible speed for such a wee bird, and just as it is about to secure the prize

a shadow falls across its path, and the little mite looks up to find a brilliant blue monster about four times its size descending upon it with closed wings. The wagtail gives vent to a "tweet" of alarm and flies off at a tangent, and a roller arrives on the scene. The semi-closed wings open wide as he is about to alight, and for just a second one sees a galaxy of scintillating blues, from the darkest to the lightest shades. Next instant the wings are closed and the blues are transformed into a sombre brown as the roller picks up the cricket. Just for one second he looks round with the insect in his beak, selects his tree, and as he flies off once more the brown disappears and the blues come into evidence. The wagtail speedily forgets his loss, and fussily sets about looking for other tit-bits, and as he runs along the bank he cheers himself and those around with a delightfully sweet little song.

A second later a little brown ball is seen coming up the stream at a tremendous pace and as though it was skimming along the surface of the water, it is so very near to it. It passes over the pool, selects a stone in the

middle of a miniature eddy just where the stream enters the pool, unhesitatingly alights on it, droops its wings and bobs, like the redstart, then with a sudden movement erects its tail and as suddenly depresses it. Then, as though it had no time to waste, it runs to the water's edge and disappears from view without any sign of a splash, and half a minute later appears almost in exactly the same spot and climbs up the same stone.

Just here the current is pretty swift, and one wonders how such a tiny thing can hold its own against it, so we take advantage of the cover afforded by some big boulders to creep up as near as possible, and as it again dives we climb into the branches of an overhanging tree to get a better view, and remain motionless as it once more comes to the surface. This time it swims round a little way and gets on to another stone. If the frequent bobs and the continuous erecting and depressing of the little, inadequate tail is any criterion, the little bird is enjoying itself to the full and having a blissful time. Next, it dives into a still bit of water on the down-stream side of a large stone, and we

watch it getting deeper and deeper down into the limpid depths, the short, rounded wings, half open, giving short, sharp beats backwards. A quick, sudden turn to the right, round the stone, and up it comes against the current it has there met, then in among a heap of small stones on the bed of the stream, where it momentarily disappears, to reappear again only a few inches below the surface in a regular whirl of white, rushing waters. Undismayed and still keeping under the surface it makes straight for a tiny waterfall, where the current rushes madly over a flat stone and falls a distance of about twelve inches.

We follow it to the very foot of the fall and there the little speck is swallowed up in the falling waters, which seem strong enough to dash it to pulp. Lost for a moment, it again makes its appearance, but this time swimming unconcernedly between the fall and the stone over which the stream is falling, forming a small backwater. The brown dipper has forced its way right under the fall and come out on the other side and seemingly to no purpose, as nothing is visible in its

beak, but it has probably got some tender morsels among the dragon and caddis fly larvæ to be found among the stones at the bottom.

From the pool we make our way down the stream whence comes the roar of mighty waters far beyond the capabilities of the comparatively placid stream we follow. About a mile lower down we find the gorge narrowing and the stream is no longer placid. The falls become higher and higher, the boulders bigger and the stream rushes and roars among them in a very frenzy, but still a greater roar than the turmoil close at hand comes from below, and on turning a bend in the stream we are confronted by a barrier of spume and spray rising from the depths below. The sun from behind flashes through the vapour, making a succession of glistening rainbows which dance and caper. A cold drizzle falls on and around everything, and as the edge is approached we look through vapour, fifty feet down, on to a very cauldron of cataclysms.

Once more gazing our fill at the gleaming rainbows, through which the distant land-

scape appears like the enchanted land of ever-moving sprites, we retrace our steps and find a way down to the foot of the fall. Here the fury of the leaping and dashing waters makes one shudder in spite of oneself. The roar is well-nigh deafening. The awful white mass hurls itself with terrific force on to the stones beneath, where it is broken up into millions of shining fragments, and these again, as they rebound from the rocks, caught up by the wind and flung in as many glittering dewdrops into the sky, go to make up the wonderful rainbows visible from above.

Above the thunder of the fall is suddenly heard a shrill note, which is the prelude to a lovely song. It comes nearer and nearer, a small, shining black bird flies past, turns suddenly to the left and, to our utter bewilderment, *appears* to disappear into the very midst of the mighty fall. The song ceases as suddenly as it had come, and naught can be heard but the roar to which one is getting accustomed. The bird again flies out, again from apparently the very heart of the fall, sits on the edge of a cliff and sends forth a

THE HOME OF THE HIMALAYAN WHISTLING THRUSH

peal of song. Is this a song of thanksgiving at its more than miraculous escape? How can anything pass through such a volume of water and ever be heard of again, much less live to sing?

Between the water and the rocks over which it falls is an appreciable space of several feet, some ten feet from the top, and here the hardy Himalayan whistling thrush has his home. A mossy home will soon be built on a projecting ledge, and here the young thrushes will see the light of day, suffused through falling water, and their tender ears will first receive the baptism of, as it were, a salvo of heaven's artillery to the accompaniment of their own parents' melodious song.

THE ROARER

THE cold morning mists still hung low over the valleys and the almost water-logged rice fields. The rice crop had long been harvested, and snipe, fan-tails, " Jack " and " painters " had found their way down to more salubrious climes and taken up their abode among the sodden fields. A flock of teal rested in a little backwater of the stream, where it hugged the bank, and a white-necked stork, with one leg tucked away somewhere under his black waistcoat, gravely meditated on the misdeeds of this wicked world, or maybe, merely considered the advisability of bestirring himself to find his breakfast.

A kite was already astir, circling gracefully over the camp, its somewhat bent wings and forked tail twitching this way and that to counter the wind currents, but ever ready to close at a moment's notice to stoop

for some little tit-bit, which those keen eyes might detect. A long-legged buzzard, in the light phase of plumage, sat on the very topmost bough of a leafless tree, its white head occasionally disappearing from view as it lazily attended to its toilet.

As the sun rose over the distant snow-capped peaks the mists vanished and villages and trees appeared as if by magic beyond the rice fields. Suddenly the calm was broken by the raucous, sawing roar of a panther in the scrub jungle, which extended from the back of the camp to the top of a ridge some 500 feet above it. A miserable, half-starved pariah dog which had sneaked out of the village to bask in the sun stood up listening, with its head cocked to one side, then put his tail between his legs, lifted his head and emitted a succession of pathetic yells, and disappeared into the houses whence he had come.

The roar was repeated thrice, and in a different place each time, showing that the beast was passing from right to left to take up his quarters for the day, in a heavy bit of jungle, which ran up one side of a thickly

wooded spur. Inquiries elicited from the villagers the fact that the brute had done considerable damage among the flocks and herds of the shepherds, who were camped on the hills around for the winter months, and that his roars might be heard at all odd times of the day or night. That he was the biggest, the most cunning, and most daring beast the countryside had ever heard of went without saying, for it is the duty of every panther to be so, and a roarer—well, of course, what else could one expect of him ? Besides, is not the heart of the Sahib craving for just such an animal, and that for which the Sahib craves must be produced ! We wondered if a little snipe-shooting after breakfast would frighten him away, but were told to make our minds easy on that score, for many Sahibs had shot snipe among the fields, but nobody had yet succeeded in frightening the old panther, and they had heard him roaring while firing was in progress not many hundred yards away. We were out for a holiday and could afford the whole of the next day to try our luck with the panther, but snipe were on the move and might be gone at

any moment, so it behoved us to attend to them first.

After breakfast, my wife and I set out with half a dozen men, as beaters, to walk up the snipe. The water in the fields was almost at freezing-point, which boded ill for a good day's snipe-shoot. We covered about a mile of country without putting up a single bird, when I suddenly remembered the teal, and wondered if I should still find them where I had seen them in the early morning. The place was not far distant, so I decided to run over and pay it a visit. Arrived at the spot, a careful crawl to the edge of the bank showed them almost in the selfsame spot, but their keen eyes were on the watch, and the whole flock rose as soon as my head topped the bank.

Two barrels accounted for five, which was something to begin the day with and keep the larder going. I rejoined the line and we continued our hunt for snipe. At last one rose with an unmistakable "chuk," but well out of range of even a choke-bore, and went straight up into the heavens. I watched to see where it would again alight,

as that might give us a clue to their favourite haunts, and some eight pairs of eyes were glued on the fast-disappearing speck, when the unexpected happened. The snipe suddenly turned, shut his wings, and began to drop to earth, as only a snipe knows how. An instant later we saw the reason for the sudden turn, as two gleaming white specks appeared in the blue sky and beat the snipe at his own game. Two little red-headed merlins had got above him and were now straining every nerve to catch him up before he reached the fields. On they came, with wings tightly closed to the body and only the pure white breast shining in the sun. One suddenly dropped perpendicularly to within a few feet of the ground, while the other kept on an inclined plane, following the track of the snipe. The latter came over our heads and within easy range, but this was no time to shoot, and if he escaped those relentless talons he deserved to live. Like a flash the merlin which was flying low passed within a few feet of us, as if to cut off the snipe's retreat and keep him from the water, and succeeded. The snipe rose,

jinked, doubled, and the next instant was rising almost vertically into the blue. With a quick turn, the merlin from above came down like a flash and missed her quarry by inches. The little tiercel, having accomplished his object and made the snipe rise, was now rising in short spirals, his long wings working in quick, sharp half-beats.

The merlin, having missed her stoop, checked her descent with a slight opening of her wings and tail and next instant was rising, vertically, to a level with the snipe. Frantically the tiercel worked, and the fraction of a second the snipe had lost while dodging the merlin had given him some advantage. Up he came level with, but not above, the snipe, and the latter kept the advantage he had got and went in the teeth of the wind. The merlin, too, was on the same level, or maybe a trifle higher, but not far enough above the snipe to stoop again. Higher and ever higher they went, the snipe some twenty yards ahead and the two merlins, some fifty yards dividing them from each other, on either side of it. Against the wind the powerful wings of the

little falcons have the advantage, and why doesn't the snipe turn, now that he is a little above one, and fly down-wind, which is his only chance?

He slightly changes direction towards the tiercel, and I thought he would pass over it and thence down-wind, but his heart fails him, and he again turns up-wind. The merlin is gaining inch by inch, both in height and in the short distance which divides them, and the three are only tiny specks in the heavens now. The merlin must have got above, though we could not tell from where we were, but the snipe has once more shut his wings and dived. The falcons do the same, and for one fraction of a second all three appear to have collided, and it seemed as though the chase had ended, but no, again they parted, and once more the snipe was rising into the sky and the merlins close behind. The snipe suddenly sees his advantage and takes it. Turning suddenly, he is caught by the breeze, and passes over the falcons as though shot from a bow, and comes with the speed of an arrow back over the line he had originally gone. The suddenness

of the move had left both the merlins some distance behind, but they had both played the game many times before, and apparently knew in advance exactly what the snipe would do. Again the tiercel descended at a sharp angle, and once more the merlin followed in the track of the snipe.

Over our heads once more they went, while we watched, fascinated, until the dark background of the hills behind our camp hid them from view, and the fact of the merlins not appearing again looked as though the game little snipe had furnished them with a hard-earned breakfast.

The whole chase had not lasted ten minutes from beginning to end, so we resumed our snipe-shoot. The evening before I had put up half a dozen birds in the very first field I had gone over, but they had quitted during the night and made their way to the plains. Half a dozen "painters" and a "Jack" were all that we managed to pick up, but the chase provided by the merlins had compensated for the meagre bag.

We gave it up after about an hour and decided to have a try for the panther. The

villagers showed us a "saddle" in the hill, and told us that there was water on the other side of the ridge, not far from the "saddle," and that he invariably began roaring again by about four in the afternoon, and slowly worked his way towards it by sundown. We gave orders for a kid or a pariah dog to meet us at the "saddle" by 5 p.m., and ourselves went to explore the country around and see if we could find a good place to "sit up" in. The place was simply ideal. A natural hollow, surrounded on three sides by immense boulders and a dense thorny hedge, overlooked the depression or "saddle" on the ridge and required no additions of any sort save a little manipulation between two boulders of the thorny hedge to make two peep-holes. There would be a bright moon later on and everything seemed to be in our favour, so we set out to explore the jungle beyond, taking our tea basket with us.

Down the side of the hill farthest from our camp we could see several tiny white specks moving about among the scrub jungle, and made our way down to find out from the

shepherds themselves what they knew of the habits of the old panther. They were a most genial lot, and prepared to give us all the information we wanted, and a great deal that we did not want. One man suggested that we should stay the night with them, and even offered us a share of their own *chuppatties* and goat's milk for dinner, and their blankets for a bed, but as we were only after a panther we did not wish to indulge all night in other varieties of *shikar* which their blankets and the close proximity to goats and sheep would, to a certainty, provide! It appeared that only that morning the panther had pulled down one of their goats within a few feet of the men. They very pluckily attacked him with sticks and stones, and he let go the goat and bolted. They, too, assured us that it was a regular "elephant of a panther," and that as he visited the "saddle" on the ridge every day we would be absolutely certain to get him.

We had our tea at the spring where the panther was supposed to drink every night, and wended our way back to the ridge just

in time to meet the little kid that had been brought up as our "tie-up."

Sure enough, before we had been sitting ten minutes we heard the distant roar of the old beast, so knew he was on the prowl.

It was repeated at intervals and came nearer and nearer until he finally came out on the ridge about a couple of hundred yards higher up, and we patiently awaited his arrival. It was still broad daylight, so if he would only oblige and come along now we could watch his progress down the spur the whole way, as it was comparatively open country, with only a few bushes and rocks dotted about here and there. We knew exactly where he was, but could see nothing of him. The ridge went up in a gradual slope for a furlong or so and then ended in a sheer cliff some fifty feet high, below which was a small *chir* pine tree, and he was just under the cliff, as we could tell by the sort of double roar as it came off the rocks.

Half an hour went by, and then another quarter, and the old beast still tantalized us by roaring at intervals, but not approaching a yard nearer, and at last darkness fell on the

land. The moon would be up in a few minutes, so it was worth waiting, and we only hoped he would not choose just that psychological moment to come and kill the kid, but give us a chance of seeing him. He had not roared for quite twenty minutes, so we presumed he was making his way cautiously down the spur and stalking the poor little kid, but imagine our disappointment when we suddenly heard his roar come faintly from the opposite direction! He had for once taken another path, direct to the shepherds' encampment, and not worried about his drink, or had had it elsewhere. Anyway, it was certain he was not coming our way, and we had better get home and save ourselves further cramps in our now stiff and aching bones. I was on the point of saying so to my wife when something made me look over my shoulder. The moon had just come over a distant peak and shone straight on the head and white waistcoat of a panther, looking straight at me, and not five yards distant. I don't know who was more surprised, he or I. I had only the second before that put my rifle down, and in any case would have had

some difficulty in getting round to my right rear, in the small space there was in front, to swing round the rifle, so I cautiously touched my wife with my foot, hoping she would be able to bring her rifle under cover of my back, but as I did so he disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared, without so much as a sound, as though the earth had swallowed him up. Was this the mate for which the other had been so incessantly roaring?

There was nothing for us to do but to get back to camp now and to dinner and bed, and let the morrow decide what further steps should be taken to get even with old "Spots."

Next morning we were roused nice and early by his unmusical roar, and as we lay in bed we heard him come nearer and nearer and pass over the top of the camp, as he had done the day before. We arranged for a pariah dog, which would give tongue when alone, and decided to "tie-up" for him at the foot of his pet ravine, about midday, and stay there until the afternoon. On this occasion he was most obliging, for

while we were looking about for a place where to tie the dog he told us exactly where he was by giving vent to a terrific roar. It came from the jungle immediately in front of us and just across a narrow ravine, and not 200 yards higher up we could see a flock of sheep grazing, so he was certainly a daring brute to tell everyone his whereabouts in this brazen manner.

The dog was quickly taken across a little stream and tied under a bush not thirty yards from us, while my wife and I laid down behind a couple of rocks on a knoll. At first the dog barked lustily, and we thought the panther would very soon arrive on the scene, but he was in a talkative mood, and again roared. The dog looked up, then deliberately got under the bush and coiled himself up and lay still. However, the panther must have heard him bark and would be coming, so we were both on the qui vive with eyes and ears strained to every sight and sound. The next item on the programme was unexpected and unrehearsed. The *guddi* (shepherd) suddenly set up a terrific hullabaloo, and began heaving huge

boulders down the hill-side. We could see him quite distinctly and longed to shout to him to stop and take his flock elsewhere, but of course dared not, so lay quiet, watching further developments. The shouts and stones of the shepherd were followed by a further demonstration on the part of "Spots," who evidently objected to this sort of treatment, and told the shepherd what he thought of him in another thunderous roar. I was meditating on the advisability of walking him up, when he decided the matter for me by giving vent to another roar which sounded very much nearer than any of the others.

I looked at the dog, and the dog had not only heard, but had also got wind, which meant that the panther had come on to the same ridge, below which the dog was tied. His ears, ordinarily cocked forward, now lay flush with the back of his neck, and his nose was twitching frantically, but he succeeded in making himself extraordinarily small behind the bush, and refused to budge. If only he would bark, or wag his tail, or do something. Suddenly I saw some movement in the bushes some twenty yards above the dog.

I looked at my wife and found her eyes glued on exactly the same spot, so knew that she had also seen it. Two, three, five, ten minutes passed, but nothing happened, when suddenly a roar came from the other side of the hill. He had passed within a few yards of our very noses and neither of us had seen him. The further spur of the ravine into which he had now gone was almost bare, so should he cross that I might yet get a shot if only I could get round quickly enough.

Leaving my wife, I simply raced up the ridge and over, where he had probably crossed, and took up my position on a projecting rock, whence I commanded a lovely view of the whole ravine. Again he obliged by roaring, and so informed me that he had not gone across but was still in the brushwood on my side, and directly below me.

My servants, instead of taking the old pariah dog with them, had let him go, and he suddenly arrived on the scene and took up his position on the very top of the most prominent boulder on the whole hillside. I cautiously got my arm round and threw a stone at him, but all I got in return

was a demonstration of great affection, and the tail almost wagged the dog off his perch, so I thought it wiser to keep still and trust to luck, and if the panther saw him he would take him for a stray sheep-dog and come and make his acquaintance. However, I waited for a good hour, but the wily brute's suspicions had evidently been roused, and he neither showed himself nor roared once during that time, and the next time we heard him speak was half an hour after I got back to camp and we were enjoying our tea.

On account of the damage done by these brutes the villagers erected a trap, and two have since been caught, but the villagers informed me the other day when I was there that the old "roarer" still roams the hills and serenades the villages on every possible occasion.

JUNGLE TALES AND TAILS

IT was somewhere about the middle of October, when the night wind, whether mild or fresh, makes one think about buttoning up the topmost button of one's great-coat and quite enjoy sitting round a roaring camp-fire after dinner, especially if the camp happened to be situated in regions where the giant spruce gives place to stunted rhododendrons and stray clumps of juniper. We had selected a well-sheltered camp for two reasons, viz., to shield us from the cold breeze and, secondly, to enable us to light fires without advertising our whereabouts to the entire neighbourhood. Old Har Singh had installed himself as near to the bonfire as he could get, and was busy regaling an admiring crowd of coolies and servants with some very " tall " yarns of his many exploits. I knew him of old. He started with me as a *shikari*, then became a *chaprassi* and

finally ended up as my bearer, and a better combination of all three attributes I have never found in any one single individual. He did not possess a single nerve in his body, was not afflicted with anything in the way of a conscience worth speaking about, but to make up the deficiency was gifted with a most vivid imagination and a tongue that would wag from morn till night. Add to this a life spent wandering about the country, from the barrack square to the tops of many of the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, and a desire to enlarge on each and every detail of his life, and you have the makings of a very fine *raconteur*, without any particular teaching. He was about 5 feet 9 inches in height with a chest on him like that of a prize-fighter, and legs and arms to match, a close-cropped head surmounted by a little round cap (when on *shikar* trips), and a great square lower jaw which would have qualified any bulldog for a first prize. This was Har Singh. He invented as he went along, and never so much as a flicker of an eyelid betrayed him, even when telling his biggest lie. His mouth was covered by an

enormous overgrown jungle which he called a moustache, so until a huge cavernous mouth opened in its entirety it was not easy to see whether he smiled. To give him his due, he never took upon himself the whole of the heroism of any adventure, but invariably shared it with "Kurnail Jarn Sahib Bahadur" or "Kuptan Porsit," or some other probably mythical master of his younger days.

As I came out of my tent after dinner to smoke my last pipe before turning in, Har Singh was finishing his famous tale of the *Bhirty*.

Now a *Bhirty* is the name given by the ordinary hillman to a man-eating panther, and though every villager has all the distinguishing features of a *Bhirty* at his finger-ends, few there are who can claim to have seen one. It is true that *Bhirtys* in different parts of the country assume different forms, and equally true that they all do not become *Bhirtys* for the same reason. Usually a *Bhirty* is the soul of a long-defunct *faquir* who has been refused alms in certain villages and been somewhat roughly treated generally.

The soul of the departed gentleman has entered the body of a panther and returned to his old haunts, to get some of his own back from the terrified villagers. The panther, too, undergoes a certain amount of change in his natural appearance. It is natural that he should assume considerably larger proportions generally, but why he should take unto himself the hoofs of a horse, the face of a langur, and carry a lighted *cherag* on the tip of his tail while carrying about the good *sadhu's* soul, I am not competent to explain. The *cherag*, too, is never extinguished in any gale, and moreover is most considerate and never seems to set fire to any of the grass through which it passes. Of course, the panther, as the host of the old *faquir*, inherits all the wiles and cunning of the human as well as his own, so is not likely to be caught napping, and the soul remains in the feline body until the deceased gentleman has been avenged and made up in lives what he lost in alms. Some are content with a dozen human lives, but some few are more exacting and are not content with under sixty.

In other parts of the country, again, the *Bhirty* (still a man-eating leopard) possesses the soul of a leper. In this case, I believe, forty is the minimum number of human lives that have to be taken. The very day the fortieth is complete, the soul leaves the panther, who continues the rest of his existence as an ordinary, respectable feline, whereas the soul goes back and finds the body it originally left, and brings back to the village a respectable member of society instead of a leper.

Har Singh is the only person I have met who has actually been close to a *Bhirty* without being killed on the spot, and did not even get his moustache singed by the lamp on the latter's tail.

I am not quite sure, but I think it was his mythical "Kurnail" Sahib who was out with him on this occasion, and they met the *Bhirty* face to face on rounding a corner, and though it was broad daylight the lamp on the tail was still burning. The "Kurnail" Sahib would not fire first of all seeing that it was a langur's face he saw looking at him, and before Har Singh could assure him it

was a *Bhirty* the animal disappeared, and as he went the "Kurnail" Sahib, too, saw what it was, but too late. Of course, it would not have much mattered if he had shot it, for he would have only had an ordinary panther's skin and skull to show for it, for no sooner does the soul depart than the body is immediately transformed into its erstwhile feline proportions and shape.

The coolies had listened with awe to Har Singh's adventure, and as I approached were congratulating him on being the only man, within living memory, who had actually seen the fearsome beast and then lived to speak about it. The *Bhirty* called up another legend which was left to me to investigate at a very early date from the night in question. About three miles from where we were camped was a ridge which ran out at right angles from the great range of mountains, extended for about three or four miles whence it started, and then suddenly fell away in a huge cliff about 4000 to 5000 feet, almost vertically, to a stream below. It was nothing more than a great rocky spur, fringed some 300 feet or so from its summit

by a dense oak jungle. I had explored the lower slopes several times and had accounted for *tahr* and *ghoorel* and a goodly number of black bears at various times, but had never been on the top, as every villager I had taken with me had been very much against my going, and assured me that it was impossible to scale the cliffs above. I felt sure there was some other reason, but could not get to the bottom of it at all. However, a bonfire on a mountain-top is almost as good as the "silver moon on the water" for making tongues wag, and old Har Singh had made a good beginning, so it was obviously up to someone to cap his story, and old Sooba began his tale of the "Kali Mai ka Suppur," and I opened my ears wide, for "Kali Mai ka Suppur" (the cliff of Kali) was the very place I had wanted to go to. It had from time immemorial been considered a place of very evil repute, and anyone visiting the goddess in her mountain fastness never returned. Sooba informed us that when he was a boy two very holy men arrived in the village, and on hearing of the cliff and its reputation decided to go up and pay their respects to the

goddess. The villagers begged them not to go, but they said that they had held communion with the spirits of the mountains, and had been warned by them not to go unless they took with them a good-looking girl of good caste from the village, whose advent would propitiate the goddess, as she had evidently got tired of her own company, having lived on the hill-top alone for some thousands of years. After many discussions with the elders of the village, it was finally decided that they should be allowed to go with a very beautiful damsel, the daughter of a *kotwal*, and should be accompanied to the fringe of the trees by three stalwarts from the village. All was settled; three goats were killed, the evening before, further to propitiate the goddess, and early one morning the party set out, with the whole village out to bid them God-speed. The whole six arrived at the fringe of the trees, and there the three stalwarts sat down to wait for the holy men and the girl, while the latter continued their ascent. The men below watched the trio approach the terrible cliff, and then an awful thing happened. Suddenly a huge

form appeared, dressed in black, and waved his arms frantically up and down, and the holy men and the girl dropped upon their faces. The stalwarts saw no more, for they turned their faces to the village and ran for their lives, but neither the holy men nor the maiden ever came back, and since then nobody had dared to even approach the cliff.

This, then, explained why I could not climb the cliffs, or even get near the top! I turned to Har Singh and asked him if he was willing to come with me and have a look for the bones of the holy men and the damsel. The old villain believed in goddesses and holy men as much as he believed in the truth of his own wonderful exploits, so was quite ready to accompany me, and, who knows, the adventure might, nay would, furnish material to even eclipse the *Bhirty* story. Sooba begged of us not to go, as he was sure that nothing but harm could come of such a venture, and after all the whole village could vouch for the fact that some evil spirit still dwelt in one of the caves, as nearly every evening they could hear a bell ringing.

This was something of which I had not

yet heard, and discovered that the people would not speak of the bell if they could avoid doing so, but Sooba had let the cat out of the bag now, so we plied him with further questions, and learnt that the bell was to be heard almost every evening, and often throughout the night, if one listened carefully. He told us he knew the whereabouts of the cave, and could point it out to us from a distance, but Kali herself would not drag him to it.

The very next day we decided to pay "Kali Mai ka Suppur" a visit, and started off before the first streaks of dawn touched the old white-capped giants around us. I was equipped with food for the whole day, so did not mind how long it took us to get there or back. Just as we started we received one last protest from the entire camp, headed by Sooba, who begged of us to give it up, and finally shouldered my rifle and sorrowfully brought up the rear.

We made a very auspicious beginning by bagging a very fine brown bear, before we had gone half a mile from camp, and Har Singh turned to Sooba and asked him to let

KALI MAI KA SUPPUR

us know if he knew of any more wonderful caves, for if a brown bear was to be shot each time we started on a similar expedition we could do with many more of them, but old Sooba was annoyed and said it was unlucky to joke about such things! The poor old fellow evidently felt himself in some way responsible, and knew the villagers would blame him for divulging the secret of the cliffs to a mad fool of a Sahib who did not realize the danger of playing with fire, and would not be warned. It was quicker to send back to camp for men to take back the bear than to set to work to skin him then and there, so Sooba went and fetched half a dozen men with ropes and poles.

I had supplied myself with a bull's-eye lantern, a couple of candles, matches and a long piece of twine, in the event of our cave being a long one and worth exploring. Midday found us on the outskirts of the fringe of trees, which the crags above overlooked. We had put up half a dozen *tahr*, but the old males had not yet made their way down from their summer quarters, and I had not seen a single head worth shooting,

so did not molest them. A musk deer with a fawn at heel was also allowed to stand and look at us for nearly a minute before she scampered off up the hill, but a lovely cock monal and two Koklass pheasants were added to the bag before we got to a spot whence the cave was visible. In awe, Sooba pointed it out to us, and then begged to be allowed to return, as he could not stay where he was, and if anything happened to us—and, of course, something was sure to happen—he would be blamed, and the police would give him an awful time. He was accordingly allowed to go and, taking the rifle from him, we continued our progress, Sooba returning with the pheasants. So far, we had heard no bells, but then they were timed for the afternoon, as a rule, and we should have to wait another hour or more before we could expect to hear their chimes. A tiny spring of water bubbling out of a cleft in a rock invited us to set about making some tea, and that would while away some time, so Har Singh set down the little tea basket and we soon had the spirit stove lit and all arrangements for tea in working

order. Sure enough, long before I had finished my tea "Kali Mai's" gong went. Not once, but half a dozen times. Sometimes a single prolonged note, and at others a succession of long or short notes, lasting for half a minute at a time.

It certainly sounded weird and uncanny, and Har Singh, even, did not quite like it. He said nothing, but his great jaw hung more than usual, and he cast wondering looks at the cave above. At last he could not restrain himself longer and in spite of his avowed disbelief in the supernatural said, "Sahib, that *is* a gong." "Well, who do you think has come up here to ring it?" I asked. "The two holy men and the girl," was the reply. "Sooba was a child when they were supposed to have come, and he must be fifty if he is a day, so what age must they be, and where have they got their food supply from for all these years?" Har Singh had no reply to make to this, but still stuck to his point that what we could hear *was* a gong, and, therefore, somebody must be ringing it. Well, we'd soon find out, for one thing I was sure of, and that was that

Har Singh was no coward and would not back out once we made a start. Tea over, we were soon on our way to the cave, but when within a hundred yards or so of it, the bell, or whatever it was, stopped. We went on and finally arrived at the mouth of a cave, but there was nothing very extraordinary about it, and what is more it did not extend to more than a few feet into the hill, so this could not be *the* one. "Woon-woon-wooooon," came once more that uncanny sound, but where from? Har Singh said it came from below, and I was equally sure it came from above, so up we went to begin with. "Woon"—that was distinctly below this time, and we both agreed on this point and retraced our steps a few yards and waited.

The next time the sound came from just about on a level with us, but to our right, so away we went in that direction. The going here was extremely difficult, for we were approaching "Kali Mai's Suppur" and every step had to be very carefully picked out. One false step and we should land on the village nearly a mile below us.

Har Singh had just helped me over a yawning chasm, when the sound was again repeated at our very feet, and came up from the rift in the rock. This was disconcerting, as neither of us had any inclination to descend a perpendicular streak of absolute pitch darkness. I lit my lamp and turned it into the bowels of the rock, but could only see jagged rock on either side as far down as the light reached, and it all ended up in darkness below. Again, "woon-wooooon" came from the depths with startling suddenness. The lamp was no use, so we put it aside and looked down waiting for the next "chime." As we looked down, Har Singh suddenly exclaimed, "Sahib, there is somebody down there with a light." Light there certainly was. Far away down through the Stygian darkness came a tiny thread of light. We looked again and again, and as our eyes got used to the intervening darkness it became evident that we were looking at a streak of daylight beyond. Then there must be a corresponding opening in the hill some twenty feet or so further down, so putting some bits of long grass over the edge to mark

the exact spot, we began cautiously descending the side of the crag, and, sure enough, came upon an opening, but only large enough to admit a very small boy, so not of much use to either of us. However, it admitted our heads, so we peeped in by turns, and in a few seconds could distinguish objects some distance away, even though our own bodies shut out the light, showing that it filtered in elsewhere, but the crevice still appeared to go downwards as well as up. I threw a stone into the opening, and it went down with a clatter but did not appear to go far. Another and still another were tried, with the same result, so it evidently did *not* go far down. A cold breeze came into our faces as we looked down, and as it was almost dead calm on our side of the hill it was obvious that the current could not be coming from the top, but from the other side of the hill altogether, and the cave must go right through it. Har Singh looked about and discovered that one side of the mouth of the cave was composed of a single boulder which appeared to be more or less loose, so we got our shoulders to it and heaved, and it moved inwards.

If it shut up the entrance further down it would not do much good, but it was all we *could* do, for it would be impossible to *pull* it outwards, so we tried again and again, and finally sent the thing down with a terrific crash.

"Wooooon-woon-woon," came the plaintive melody from within, but seemingly much further away than it sounded when we were up above.

The hole enlarged, I turned on my lantern and took a very slow and cautious step on to the boulder we had rolled down. It was firm, and so was the ground beyond, but sloping steeply downwards. An icy breeze nearly dislodged my hat, but it was fresh and sweet and not at all damp or tainted in any way. I looked back and found old Har Singh with my shotgun at the "ready"! "Where is the tea basket?" I asked. "At the mouth of the cave," was the reply; "I thought two hands might be necessary to use the gun." I had guessed by now the origin of the chimes, but he evidently had not, and still had doubts about the death of the holy men and the maiden!

The cave was a regular baronial hall when you once got inside, and after a few feet of downhill it went straight ahead on a level gradient. We passed the "chimney" we had originally looked down and saw the blue sky above, and some thirty or forty yards brought us to a right-handed turn almost at right angles to its original course, and daylight ahead. A very faint streak, but unmistakable. "Woonnooowooon," came a terrific roar which filled the whole cave with sound, and at that very instant off went my hat and further convinced me that we had no ghosts or ghouls to worry about. A few steps further on we turned a corner into a flood of daylight and three separate openings in the hill, all varying in size, from one big enough to admit a man's head to the biggest through which a man could crawl on hands and knees, and here was the secret of the "chimes." I pointed out the openings to Har Singh, and was explaining how the wind blowing through the different-sized openings made the sort of three-note wail. He was by no means convinced, and the very next instant "wooon" came the wail from *behind* us. "There,

Sahib, it is *not* the wind." That it was the wind and nothing else there could be no doubt, playing tricks among the rifts and cracks in the rocks. But there was no convincing Har Singh, and, up to this day, he believes one of the holy men had something to do with it, or if he does not actually believe it himself, he would like others to do so, as a matter-of-fact thing like wind would spoil the whole story, whereas the holy men and the maid lend themselves to something really spicy in that line.

We saw no horrors in the way of bones and skeletons, and if the story of the two holy men and the maid is true, and the villagers all swear that it is, I daresay there are many ways of accounting for the disappearance, from the scene, of the two very *worldly* men and an unfortunate victim. I never heard Har Singh's version of our adventure, and if I had this story would have been more worth telling.

STORIES OF A CHINKARA

I AM an old buck, by far the oldest in the district, at least so far as I am aware, and were I to detail all the incidents connected with my long and eventful life I doubt whether the tale would ever be completed, for I have not long to live now and have been deprived of my little herd, and am a wanderer and an outcast, but as some of my experiences may be of interest to the rising generation I shall now set to work and write a short autobiography, dealing with some of the most important events of my stirring existence.

I was born in the Punjab, and in that portion of it then known as the *Bar* and now called the Chenab Colony. When I was a little fawn, racing along behind my mother's heels, my home was a vast wilderness of sandhills, with here and there a small scrub jungle and an occasional small tree, giving the only bit of

shade and colour in all that great expanse of unending grey, barren soil. A wolf or a fox we sometimes came across, but otherwise, with the exception of a little bird life, we often did not see a living thing for days at a time, unless we struck a *jungli* encampment with their cattle or goats and sheep. Their mongrel dogs often chased us and were egged on by a lot of ragged, ruffianly boys, but as we knew that even an ordinary six months' old fawn could outstrip both dogs and boys, these chases were rather good fun than otherwise, and we amused ourselves by bounding along in front till they gave up.

Then came the time, when I was about a year old, when thousands of men flocked into our dear old desert and began digging as though their lives depended on it, while others carried away the earth in baskets and heaped it up in great mounds on each side of the deep channel they were making. This went on day after day, month after month and year after year, and there was literally no end to the novelties that cropped up, till even we gave up being surprised at anything. First the canal excavations; then came the great

long, white poles with wire stretched taut over the top; then a straight, unending road, over which were placed huge slabs of timber of a peculiar but pleasant odour; and over these again long rods of iron; and on top of all this a huge, great black thing ejecting volumes of foul, black smoke and fire and dragging a number of carts, but very different to the old bullock carts we had often seen. The first time we saw it and heard it shriek it gave us such a start we did not stop running for two miles. However, at night we came back and had a good look and sniff at everything, and soon learnt that the slabs of wood were deodar sleepers, and the rods of iron, rails, and the screeching thing an engine, and that together with the carts, a train. Then bungalows sprang up in all directions, and where formerly there was not a blade of grass or a drop of water for miles, now everywhere appeared canals and luscious fields of wheat. During this time we were frequently fired at, and I have seen many a promising young buck "bite the dust," as they say; and once or twice our curiosity led us too far, and before

we knew it we had yelling fiends all round us, throwing stones, sticks or anything they could lay their hands on, and then we had to scatter and simply go for our lives and make for any gap we could find. I don't think any of us were ever caught, though often struck by stones and such-like. Every year now made a difference to our playgrounds, and the space got more and more confined.

We thought of leaving the district, but others we met told us the same tale, so there was no point in going away, and we made the best of it. The tender wheat in the early spring compensated for a good deal, and as it grew up afforded us cool shelter during the heat of the day, but brought with it a new and terrible danger.

While the ground was dry and hard we knew nothing could touch us in point of speed, but when they began watering the fields and made the whole place "greasy" it was a very different matter, and one we had to take particular note of. With the men from other provinces came new breeds of dogs, and ones which we found very soon were not the old curly-tailed curs of

the *junglis*, but dogs with a turn of speed almost equal to our own, and no longer the bare-footed urchins, but mounted men meaning business, to encourage them. As time went I noticed that nearly every man in the district gained possession of a horse, not the usual country tat, but fine, big, upstanding horses that could gallop. Where once nothing but grey sand and grey soil met the eye, was now all an enormous stretch of green with trees and villages everywhere, and this they said meant something that men called "money," and "money" again meant good dogs and horses and guns. I might go on for a week talking of these so-called improvements, but space forbids, and so in conclusion I shall relate just one adventure, and that my last, so far. Another such would undoubtedly be the last, not only of adventures, but of all things, for me.

Early one morning we were returning from the fields to the only bit of our dear old desert now left to us, which was about two square miles in extent bounded by fields on every side and dotted about with little bushes, under which we rested while the fawns played about.

Suddenly one of us spotted half a dozen white men and with them three big dogs, so we knew we were in for it. I gave the signal, "Fly," but that is the worst of our kind: they never will realize how much is saved by taking to their heels at once. After three or four long graceful bounds they must needs turn round and watch the dogs coming on, as though fascinated by the sight, until it is almost too late, and then they go off, beginning with a succession of leaps, and then settling down to the pace that kills the pursuers. Well, as there were two fawns in the herd, it behoved myself and another buck to lead off the dogs, and to that end we waited and trotted leisurely behind the herd till the leading dog was within thirty yards, and then we "lepped" high into the air to attract attention and shot off at right angles to the direction taken by the herd; and on came all three dogs after us and the thunder of galloping hoofs some distance behind. We dared not go near the fields, the ground there being wet, so had to go round and round our playground in circles, or cutting figures, hither and thither, as we saw an opening. Unfor-

tunately, every such manœuvre told against us, for no sooner had we come to the fields and would have to turn one way or the other than one of the riders galloped off to the side to head us off. And so it went on, mile after mile.

We stuck well together, and though we could hear the horses snorting and the dogs panting hard, we were none too fresh ourselves, and I was a bit old for this sort of thing and was rapidly getting blown. Another mile or so and I felt that I had shot my bolt, and half a mile more would do me. I looked back as I ran and saw only one dog near us—I never saw such a brute, there was no tiring him: a long-haired, slate-grey sort of coloured brute, and a man and a woman on either side of him, cheering him on with such endearing epithets as "Into him, old man," "Good dog, now then," and a lot of fiendish yells thrown in every now and again, by way of encouragement. I saw one chance of escape and made up my mind to take it and risk everything on it. We were approaching the line of fields again, and I noticed my companion showed signs

of uneasiness and would to a certainty jink to the right or to the left when we got near them, but would never take to them because of the water, if he could help it. So I ran along beside him till right up to the edge almost, when I made one last desperate dash, got ahead of my comrade, getting him between me and the dog, and next instant was into the wheat and lying low, while, as I expected, the other buck dashed along the very edge of the field. Away went the dog, the man, and the woman, past me.

A few seconds later the other two dogs lumbered past, showing frightful signs of distress, and after them two more men.

Oh, horrors! They stop at the edge and not five yards from where I lay, and to my surprise I see the man and woman who had gone past return and join them, and also the dog. I hear the man say, "By Jove! What a glorious run! Those 'chink' deserved to escape." My heart rushed into my mouth, and the awful uncertainty and anxiety, the hopes and fears, were almost too much for me, and yet in spite of my desperate straits and misgivings I could not help but notice

the foam-flecked, heaving flanks of the tired horses, and the frothing tongues of the well-nigh exhausted dogs that lay limp and panting beside the horses. Two men have dismounted and are petting the dogs, and one on horseback calls out, "I say, there's water; let's take the dogs to it." And immediately the little cavalcade moves on, and I—well, I breathe again.

WANDERINGS O'ER HILLS, RIVERS AND PLAINS

A COLD, crisp morning late in December, a cloudless sky above and the remnants of the last fall of snow glistening white against the blue hills. A flock of vultures soaring high over yon distant knoll, and just below them a tiny kestrel hovering, motionless, in the wind, acknowledge the power of the fast-rising sun. The occasional guttural notes of the Koklass pheasant are wafted down by the breeze from the deep forest-clad ravine above, and the charm of the Himalayas at this season of the year is irresistible.

Nearer at hand it is all bustle and commotion. Coolies fighting for the lightest loads; mulemen vainly trying to keep their animals from straying into the flower-beds; servants shouting instructions to all and

sundry in the hope that somebody may be induced to listen and carry them out. It is the morning of the first march of many more to come, after a long sojourn. Pandemonium has reigned since early morning, but at last everything appears to be gone and we prepare to mount our hill ponies and follow the luggage and wonder how much of the crockery will be whole by the time we reach our destination—nearly a month's journey ahead of us. Tin cans, lanterns, bedding, a bundle of brass utensils belonging to some of the servants, all piled up and bound round with various bits of knotted ropes and rotten twine, clatter and clank at every step of the patient animal that carries them. In places, a trickle of water has frozen hard during the night across the road, and both men and animals have to pick their steps carefully from stone to stone. The sun is distinctly hot, but round every bend of the hill one gets into the shade and an icy blast greets one.

The trees have lost their leaves and the glorious reds and yellows of a month ago are no longer to be seen, but the mighty

giants on either side of the valley look all the grander in their covering of fresh snow.

A fortnight's wandering in varied scenes brings us to the foot-hills, and we change our little steeds to a weird contrivance called a *khatnow* and take to water. A *khatnow* is made of two inflated buffalo skins, with the back of the animal in the water and the legs up in the air. Between the legs is tied a small bedstead, and on this the passenger reclines. Two men accompany each *khatnow*, one at either end, on separate skins. The combination of the skins and the bedstead is called a *khatnow*, but a single skin is known as a dray. You climb in and make yourself as comfortable as you can with a couple of cushions, and place your gun and belt of cartridges before you, as there is always a possibility of getting a few ducks in the course of the journey down the river.

My wife and I had a *khatnow* each, and having started off all our luggage by mules and coolies, we got on our river craft and started. The glare on the river was

trying, but with the help of smoked glasses it was not unbearable, and our progress was distinctly rapid. The men accompanying the *khatnow* lie across their drays between the hind and fore legs. They use their legs as paddles, and are also provided with a small, round paddle, which they use with one hand, the other being used to hold on to the *khatnow*.

On approaching a rapid in the river there is often much discussion as to how they should navigate it, and if the passenger understands their jargon it is not very reassuring, for a difference of opinion at such a time between the two men responsible for your safety does not conduce to ease of mind. Your frail craft approaches the seething waters, and the older of the two of your Jehus takes care to inform you that if the *khatnow* takes the current towards the hill nothing can save it, and it will be dashed against that projecting rock. The other man, not to be outdone, says, "Yes, but if we hug the outside current we'll be caught in that whirlpool and swung into the main current and capsized among the rocks in the centre."

A WEIRD CONTRIVANCE CALLED A *KHATNOW*

There seems no other way possible. The river here divides itself into three currents, one leading to the rocks, one to the whirlpool, and the third is the main current of seething, boiling foam, with tips of jagged snags visible at every few feet. If you are a stranger to these gentry you will probably put up a silent prayer and think of all your past omissions and commissions, but if you know them of old you just smile, prepare yourself for some fast pitching and tossing, take a good hold of the sides of your bed and sit on your gun and cartridges.

They have not made the worst of it to frighten you. Oh, dear, no! It is only their little way to show what fine fellows they are to have achieved the impossible, and then, of course, having got you through in safety much *backshish* is sure to be result. My *khatnow* led the way and, so far as I could make out, it sampled all three of the currents and came out safely at the bottom of the rapid none the worse. As my wife neared it there was much shouting of instructions from my men to hers, who took not the least notice, but went their own

sweet way and were soon up with me with their charge a little wet about the feet from the spray, but otherwise in thorough enjoyment of the, to her, novel experience.

Hour after hour went past and found us still paddling on, and at last, to give the men a rest and ourselves a little movement from the everlasting recumbent or sitting position, we came to the bank and regaled ourselves with the contents of our tea basket. The first journey was the longest and we did not get to our camp till well after sunset. As soon as the sun went down it became very cold, and we pitied the men with their feet in the water and were very glad to see the camp-fires ourselves.

The next two days we had shorter distances to do and got into camp in good time, and after three days of *khatnow* we changed our means of locomotion to a much slower method, though much more comfortable, namely, a raft of sleepers. All our luggage went on two rafts, with most of the servants, while we made ourselves comfortable on a third, with the cook and his kitchen stowed away in one corner. If the sun became too

A RAFT OF SLEEPERS

hot, we erected a small tent and watched from under the sides for slumbering crocodiles on either bank. The raft was about 100 feet long by 30 feet wide, and was propelled occasionally by two men with long poles. For the most part we glided slowly along with the current, and the raftsmen only bestirred themselves when a change of direction was necessary, or where some undesirable current had to be avoided.

The snow-capped peaks had given place to low-lying hills covered with scrub jungle, and that, in turn, to the unending plains of Northern India. Now as we looked back we could see the hills fading away into the dim distance, while in front of us lay a limitless expanse of water and sand, with green fields and, here and there, villages and trees on either side.

Voices carried over the water in a most uncanny way. Not a soul could be seen, yet one could almost hear the words uttered by pedestrians in the far distance. The "honk-hank-honk" of a skein of geese immediately to your right front would send you flying for your gun, only to find the long

line flying low over the fields a quarter of a mile away. There, away ahead of you, in the white stretch of sand, what looked like a log of wood attracted your attention, for a log of wood is frequently a suspicious character, and you get your glasses and have another look. Yes, it is a crocodile, and a fine big one, basking in the sun. The gun is changed for the rifle, and you glide slowly on. The raftsmen give the last push to the raft, guide it into the requisite direction and sit down at the back of it, and there is not a movement or sound on the raft as it slowly approaches the great saurian. Two hundred yards still divide you, and you lie full length with your rifle at the "ready," watching him. Slowly his head goes up and his ugly, long snout is silhouetted against the sand. Now or never! The ball flies through space to embed itself in the sand a few inches above the neck. A wriggle and a splash and the "log" is no more, and the long ripples alone bear witness to his hurried retreat into the depths, to appear again some hours later.

A GREAT SAURIAN

For an hour or so there is not a sign of life anywhere; not even a vulture in the clear blue sky above. Suddenly a turn in the river brings you on to a small bay formed by the junction of a large mountain stream. This is the meeting-place of the feathered world.

A couple of "brahminy" ducks give warning of your approach with an ill-timed "kwank-kank, kurr-kank," a drake mallard in the short weeds alongside takes it up with his "kir-kir, kir-kir." A black-headed tern stops circling over his puddle and passes over the raft, a pied kingfisher drops from his "point" where he has been hovering and skims low over the water, making for a stump just beyond.

Suddenly there is a whir of many wings as a large flock of mallard, pin-tail and teal rise out of the weeds, out of reach of your gun. Hardly have they gone a hundred yards when the steady, onward, rising flight is turned to a medley of zigzags, and a dash for the river. A bolt from the blue has descended on the luckless flock in the shape of a fine,

dark peregrine falcon. The flock is now divided. It is each for himself and the devil take the hindmost. One is taken, but it is not the hindmost. The falcon has struck right into the middle of that whirring mass of wings and now sits on the bank with her quarry. But this is no safe place, and too many prying eyes may be on her, so she looks around, drags her duck a few paces behind her, and with difficulty rises from the sand to make for a clump of trees half a mile away. Two maroon-backed kites which had been sitting on a cotton tree behind the raft give chase, but the falcon is a match for them, even weighted as she is.

From the opposite bank of the river rises, in haste, another marauder who has been on the look-out for just such a contingency. This is the steppe eagle, which is a past master in living on the earnings of others. The falcon has the start, both in distance and altitude, and her wings work fast to keep the advantage already gained, while the eagle strains every effort to catch up. The peregrine appears to be gaining, and is getting perceptibly higher than the eagle

every second, still followed by the maroon-backed kites, not very far behind. Suddenly there is a tremendous rush of wings from behind, and looking up I see a black object dropping from the heavens with closed wings, and another close behind the first. Poor falcon! Her days are numbered if she persists in holding on to her quarry. The two fast-approaching Pallas' fish eagles have the advantage in height, and down they come at incredible speed, and next second one has strooped and struck, and the falcon and the duck part company.

The peregrine flies forward, the duck is falling to the ground, while the eagle recovers herself and follows in its wake. The mate following behind nips in and catches the falling duck and sails off with it, pursued by the peregrine, the kites, and the steppe eagle. The former rises above the eagle and stoops with terrific velocity on to the robber, who zigzags to avoid the onslaught of the infuriated falcon. Distance and trees hide the final act of the drama, but it does not take much guessing as to who finally partook of the duck.

Fifteen marches on horseback, three days by *khatnow*, four on rafts and one in a house-boat brought us to the rail-head and a delightful trip to a close.

FROM FAWN TO LORD AND MASTER

HE was nearly three months old, and in that short space of time had seen a great deal of the jungle world, but his education had not yet been taken earnestly in hand. He had certainly learned a great deal from watching his Mamma one way and another, and remembered with awe the first time his mother had left him in haste, with injunctions to lie very low and not to move on any account, while she trotted off, standing listening and gazing wistfully back at her son and heir every few steps. He was very young then, and there were so many things he wanted to ask, but mother had gone, and he was so frightened. The noise that first made her get up and listen intently was now a deafening roar, and seemed to come nearer, and ever nearer. All the sounds he heard were new

to him, as he was only two days old then, and with the exception of bird voices and the yelling of jackals the night before, in the distance, he had heard nothing, and then mother was with him and quieted his fears, but now there was nobody near to tell him what all this hubbub meant. True, the jackals had made a most fearful noise, but all their yells were similar, whereas now no two sounds seemed to be the same, and the medley was most terrifying.

His mother's injunctions were really superfluous, for after she had gone he was paralysed with fear and could not have moved one step had he tried to. The sounds at last seemed to be all round him, and then he saw four or five most curious-looking things quite near him. They walked on two legs, and had long sticks in the other two "legs," which they flourished about and hit against the adjoining trees and made fearful noises as they went. Only that morning he had seen mother stand up on her hind legs to reach some berries that were too high for her otherwise, and even then she had to put her fore legs on the nearer branches to keep

herself in that position till she got the berries, but these "things" required no sort of support and actually walked on two legs. One "thing," as it went past, struck the top of the bush under which he lay and nearly made him jump up and run, but luckily the "thing" passed on before he made up his mind, and then, of course, he decided to sit where he was. The "things" had gone, and the noise they made was now far distant, but where was mother, and why did she not return? "Oh, joy! there she comes," and off he went as fast as his weak little legs could carry him to meet her. How well he remembered the explanations he had received, and the answers to the thousand and one questions he had asked, though it was nearly three months ago. How mother had told him that the "things" that walked on two legs were "men," who formed a long line and were driving all the animals in the jungle before them to a place where other men sat behind screens with an awful instrument they called a gun, which makes a fearful noise and nearly always kills whatever it hits, and if it does not kill, how it hurts!

Mrs. Sambhur had told his mother all about it one night, when they were together in the fields. She had been hit in the hind quarter once, long ago, so knew all about it, and bore the mark still. He also had vivid recollections of the time, a fortnight ago, when father, mother, aunts and brother *cheetuls* all got up—for of course he now went about with the herd—and said they smelt fire, and soon after they heard the distant crackling of twigs and could see the flames coming over a knoll close at hand, and how they had all to run for their lives. He had had to run pretty hard several times of late, and had once heard a gun quite close to him and seen an aunt kicking up her heels in agony, but seeing the rest fly off as hard as they could go, he had his work cut out to keep up with them.

He had seen, by now, nearly every kind of animal in the jungle, had gazed in admiration as a herd of gaur went past him, at an old bull rubbing his horns against a sapling, and finally breaking it, and had marvelled at his enormous strength and massive proportions, and had envied a sambhur stag his beautiful long antlers. His own father's were as

pretty and symmetrical a pair as any he had seen, but the sambhur's were so much thicker and stronger. He had looked with contempt at the short horns of a muntjac and had greatly wondered when he by chance discovered the latter had two long tusks and heard his curious bark. The mouse-deer, hare, jackal, and several kinds of wild cats had been carefully scrutinized in turn and he knew them all. Once, in the early morning, he had seen across a paddy-field a sambhur hind going for her life, and a few seconds later saw five reddish animals come out of the jungle and take up her tracks and follow. They did not look unlike jackals except that they were different in colour and a little bigger, and his mother had explained that they were jungle dogs and the most dreaded enemies the *cheetul* had. One night he heard a blood-curdling sort of noise, while the herd was comfortably seated in the open chewing the cud, and instantaneously every member was on its feet, eyes wide open and ears at full cock, their tails twitching and feet stamping. Mother said it was a panther, and shortly after the roar one of his aunts gave

a "bell" and stared into the trees beyond the *maidán*. They were all very uneasy, but he could see nothing till some time after, when he saw a long, lithe form glide slowly and noiselessly into the open out of the jungle, but keeping in the shade of the trees. Two or three "bells" followed in quick succession, and the herd waited no longer, but turned and dashed off in the opposite direction. Mother explained how the panther, too, was to be avoided, being almost as bad as the wild dogs. Worse than the dogs in that he moved so noiselessly, and was such an adept at concealing himself, but not so bad if you escaped his first onslaught and got well away, as he would not follow like the dogs did.

He had missed his father from the herd for some time, and was very astonished when he came across him, one night in a clearing, looking very dejected and minus his lovely antlers, which had always been a source of admiration to him with just a shade of envy. Mother then explained how he, too, when he grew old enough, would boast a pair of antlers like his father's and shed them annually.

The following winter he had watched with awe two fine stags fighting for supremacy, and had seen the vanquished, badly scarred and bleeding, leave the field, and had soon after himself felt the point of those terrible horns, and had learned to keep a respectful distance from the possessor. How he loathed the victor, and what a jealous bully he was!

As the years rolled on he had found himself getting bigger and stronger and even boasting a pair of antlers; they were, of course, small when compared with many others he had seen, but he soon discovered that their possession was not so enviable after all, and that the life of the owner of a small pair, like his were, was no bed of roses. He had on one occasion attempted to fight the lord and master of a herd and to gain a footing in it thereby, but had been ignominiously defeated and obliged to flee amid the jeers and laughter of all the ladies, and felt morally and physically sore for days after. All during the autumn, when the nights were getting chilly, he had to wander about alone, and often longed for the happy times when he ran alongside his mother, with no cares and

worries, with other eyes and ears than his own to watch over his welfare. Now he had to depend entirely on his own alertness to escape the many dangers that beset him on all sides. He bore his last defeat in mind for many days, so thought it wiser and safer to give all herds a wide berth, but it was a dreary life roaming over those vast jungles all by himself, with never a word from the opposite sex to cheer him.

In his many wanderings he had frequently met other young stags in a similar plight, but they brooded over their wrongs and were usually uncommunicative and uninteresting and often ready to fight him for no reason at all.

After he had shed his antlers for the fourth time and got past that irritating stage when he felt he must rub them against every tree he came to, to allay the tickling sensation, and had got rid of that fluffy, velvety stuff which encased them, he once more made up his mind to fight for the mastery of a herd.

He had not long to wait before he came across a small herd of five hinds and a couple of fawns, and was glad to find that the stag

in charge was no other than one of those he had met the year before wandering alone through the jungle, and who had wished to bring about a quarrel. He meant to give him his heart's desire now, and went forth boldly to do battle. The two faced each other for a few seconds, each taking stock of the other. Then there was a simultaneous rush, and with a click both pairs of antlers firmly interlocked. Each knew from past bitter experience what he should have to endure if he was beaten, and the thought made each bend a little lower and put all his strength into the encounter. They strained every nerve, first one yielding a step, then the other. They swayed from side to side, their sides heaved with the exertion, and then the herd stag was pushed back a couple of paces and brought on to one knee, while the hinds held their breath and watched with intense interest. He was up again, however, and still held his ground. The antlers never separated for one single instant, and each knew that the least bit of wavering or turning of the head and he was done for. A steady forward push to bring the other down is his only

hope, and so the battle raged, fiercely for some minutes. The herd stag was, however, giving, and no mistake. Slowly, but steadily, the other pushed him backward, step by step, till, finding himself conquered and no match for the other, with a quick movement of the neck he disentangled the antlers and turned to flee, but not before our young friend, carried forward by the impetus, had scored his point and left the mark of his antler in the other's flanks. The other dashed off, but at the edge of the jungle he stood and faced about as if to accept the challenge the other hurled forth, then thought better of it, and disappeared into the jungle. The young stag turned round to receive the congratulations of his newly acquired harem, and no happier *cheetul* was to be found in the jungle that day as he proudly strutted before the herd. The hind which had hitherto been on sentry-go while the battle lasted also turned to welcome her new lord. "Le roi est mort, vive le roi," was the cry of the herd as it left the fields on the dawning of another day.

ALPINE PASTURES

THE month is May; the time, that glorious hour before the sun rises over the distant snow-capped giants which are already changing from a dull silvery grey to the most delicate tint of pink.

The last monotonous, but not unmusical, notes of the Scops owl are wafted up from the fringe of trees far below you, visible only in the form of a dense black mass, mingled with the clatter of kitchen utensils and the clearing of throats and coughing, which is always the sign of a waking camp in India. As you roll over to steal a few more minutes' sleep, with the sound of laboured breathing and blowing in your ears, as the general help, whom your cook has engaged, vainly struggles to rekindle the dying embers of last night's bonfire into a respectable blaze, the loud call of the Koklass pheasant is

heard and you are warned that this is no time for sleep, and if you are to be among the haunts of the *burrhel* before they have left their grazing grounds you must waste no more time in sleep. Your dressing and toilet in a *shikar* camp are of the simplest, and before your faithful factotum has got your tea and toast ready, you are dressed and sitting before the blaze and watching the kettle simmering.

It is still dark in the valleys, but up on the alpine pastures the dawn is breaking and the plaintive " Lip-ya, lip-ya " of the Himalayan snow-cock can be heard among the rocks all round and above the camp.

A hurried *chota-hazri* and you are off up the hill with your pet rifle carried by the *shikari* behind you, and ere the sun has topped the neighbouring crests you are safely ensconced behind a huge boulder which shelters you from the cutting breeze and yet affords you an excellent view of the country around, which you carefully scan through your glasses. At last a wee grey dot moving among the rocks far above catches the eye, and as it gets accustomed to the distance a solitary

DISTANT SNOW-CAPPED GIANTS

ewe is revealed making her way leisurely from boulder to boulder. This is the sentinel, and following the line she is taking, your glasses soon pick up a herd of some fifteen sheep, some still browsing, one old ram standing on the very pinnacle of a large, pointed rock, spying out the land, and a couple of young lambs carrying on a mimic war, lazily watched by their admiring parents. First of all one takes three or four paces back, then getting upon his hind legs he runs forward on two legs and charges his opponent, lowering his head as he comes down on all fours again, when within a foot of the other. No. 2 receives him with head bent, and so they stand for a few seconds, then retreat, and this time it is No. 2's turn to attack, and so the play goes on.

Those that are browsing, however, do not seem at ease, and you notice that every now and again heads are raised and one or more come to the edge of the little plateau and gaze over into the valley below, in spite of the fact that the old ram still stands stationary on his rock and the sentinel some fifty yards below has given no sign of alarm.

There is no reason for their uneasiness. It is not exactly alarm, and you are at a loss how to account for it. They could not have got wind of you as the wind blows straight down the hill, a fact you were careful to notice before you took up your position, and they certainly have not seen you. So what can it mean? One thing, however, is certain, and that is that you dare not attempt a stalk till the last of them has gone over the spur behind them, for in their present uneasy state of mind not an object could stir without it being observed. So you resign yourself to a long and weary waiting.

No. Long it may be, but never weary, for the sun is well over the hill-tops and a glorious panorama unfolds itself. On your right, and as far as the eye can reach, range upon range of great waving mountains and serried peaks, snowfields and perpendicular cliffs, barren slopes and dark green forests of spruce and fir, or the light green birch and maple, with a fitting background formed by the furthest range, its virgin snows mingling with the thin, fleecy clouds miles and miles away. Below you is a green stretch of soft

turf liberally sprinkled with flowers of every shade and colour, which is bordered by a fringe of juniper and stunted birch and rhododendron, now one mass of pink and white, for these altitudes are too high for the crimson variety, and below that again the dark forest line, extending down for miles till the haunts of man are reached, the dwellings looking, at this distance, like a colony of grey-brown ant-hills.

As you fill and light your pipe you are at peace with the world, and while keeping one eye on the *burrhel* above, you have ample leisure to watch the antics of a tiny wren that skips about among the rocks beside you and from time to time looks at you with its tiny wee black beads of eyes, curious to know what man could have to do here. Anon, a mouse-hare jumps on the stone before you, pricks his ears, sits up on his tailless haunches and carefully goes through his morning ablutions, rubbing his pink paws first over nose and eyes, till the head, ears and neck all have their turn, when he stops to listen, and just then becomes aware of the presence of a trespasser on his little

domain and scuttles off into a crevice, to reappear again a few minutes later. A flock of snow-pigeons fly past at a tremendous pace to their feeding-grounds, and the cheery note of the red-billed chough fills the air—"krea-kree-kree, krea-kree." "Oh, isn't this lovely," he seems to say, and the remark is taken up by a score of little black throats that whirl about in the air, cutting the most extraordinary capers in the clear blue sky. A lammergeyer sails gracefully over the plateau just above the sheep, and satisfied that none of them are bleeding, or likely to die just yet, he begins circling, and without one single movement of those long wings, and without the least exertion, rises higher and ever higher, till he soars over the ridge above and drops into the next valley. Peace and quiet reign supreme and all the inhabitants of this mountain-top appear to live in harmony.

Alas, the marauder who is to strike terror within their little hearts is not far off, and you realize that something is amiss in the feathered world, too, as you see the choughs all rise up together and begin ringing into

the clear blue sky. They are no longer playing with each other, stooping and rising as the mood seizes them, but ascending on steady wing, as if to get beyond the strike of some foe.

You look cautiously round, above and below, and soon discover the cause. There, just above your camp, are two dark specks, a shade darker than the trees against which they can be seen, and as they approach you can clearly see a white patch on either wing and another on the tail of one, while the other is of a uniform dark brown, almost black, and only a lighter shade on the head. These are the dread "Dung-shoorish" of the shepherd, or the golden eagle, aptly called "the monarch of the feathered tribe." The one with the white patches on wings and tail is slightly the larger bird, so you put her down as a young female in her first plumage, and the other an old tiercel. Not a flap of their wings, and yet every turn they take finds them a hundred feet higher than the last, and the only movement perceptible to the eye is a slight twist of the tail every now and again. Up and up they come, till

when straight over your head you notice their heads are ever on the turn, watching every inch of country beneath them. Suddenly a scared snow-cock rises with a whir and a frightened scream, and is instantly followed by the tiercel, who is nearer to it at the time, and he in turn is pursued by the female. The chase is of short duration, as the eagles had the advantage, and were in full stoop before the cock was able to get up his pace. The tiercel, however, missed, but as he rose to make his point the female was up to the cock, and a pair of relentless talons had it safely in their firm grasp.

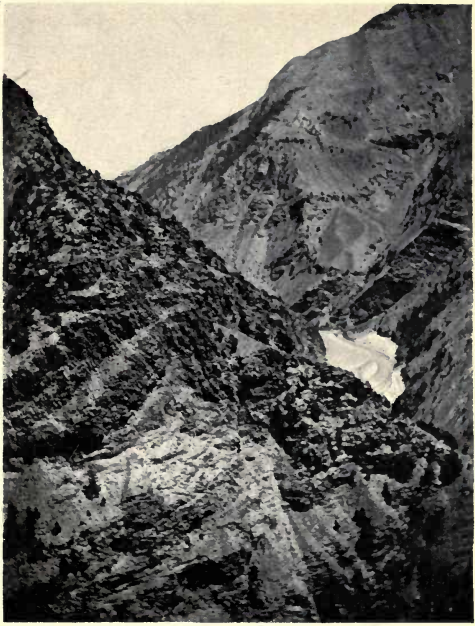
Easily she sailed off, bearing her prize to the cliffs beyond, while the tiercel followed quietly behind.

But what of the sheep in the meantime, as it is now getting late in the morning and all self-respecting *burrhel* should have chosen the spot for their midday siesta. They have moved a little way up the hill, but do not appear to be in any hurry to settle down for the day. At last they round the spur, and even the rearguard has vanished, and you prepare to follow, but look

at the 2000 feet of hard climb before you, ere you make up your mind to tackle it. There is no need now for any particular caution, as the herd is well on the other side of the hill. Climbing is not an unmixed blessing in this rarefied atmosphere and your progress is slow, but at length you reach the crest and peer over a rock, taking great care to show as little of yourself as possible. After a few minutes you are rewarded, and again see the herd, but still on the move. What can it mean? Slowly you watch them go along the contour of the hill, across the ravine, and along the opposite side, and still very much on the qui vive. The way they have now taken is almost an impossible one to follow, being a succession of landslides and rocks which the least movement would set going and hurl you down the slide with a miniature avalanche on the top of you. Even as the sheep go over you can hear great boulders being displaced and go hurtling down the hill-side to the *nullah* below.

The only course open to you is to go along the spur you are now on, climb another

100 feet or so and take the next spur from where it joins the one on which you are. Up you go, more than ever determined to be even with the herd that has given you such a tramp, but before you reach the top you have to cross a patch of snow which has not melted yet, some 300 yards long by 100 yards broad, and this suddenly gives you the whole clue regarding the uneasiness of the *burrhel*." There, straight before you, are the tracks of the ounce, or snow-leopard, but not very fresh. They make a good, deep impression, which shows that the snow was soft at the time when he passed, so therefore it must have been late on the previous evening and just after the sun had left the place. Had they been made while the sun was on them, and the snow soft, even if they had not been quite obliterated by the melting of the snow, they would certainly not be clear, as the water would have filled up the toe prints and, freezing during the night, have made the pugs uneven, which they are not. On the other hand, as it freezes in these altitudes as soon as the sun goes down, the snow would be too hard to



A SUCCESSION OF LANDSLIDES AND ROCKS

take an impression, so it must have been made last evening, and the leopard by now might be twenty miles away. However, it was enough for the sheep, who must have got some scent of him on the tainted air, and as there is not the least chance of their composing themselves to sleep to-day there is little use trying to follow them into the next district. So you get on the leeward of a sheltering rock and start on the sandwiches and cold tea your man has sent with you.

That done, your faithful pipe is again requisitioned, while you smooth out the greasy old newspaper which formed the outer covering of your frugal breakfast, and read of events which took place three months previously. Gradually a drowsy feeling comes over you: you find yourself in the arms of Morpheus and in your dreams watch the sheep still grazing and the little lambs at play.

From your dreams you are rudely awakened by the individual beside you, who informs you in a stage whisper, with his eyes staring out of his head, that he has seen a *bhaloo*.

Following his gaze, you spot a brown speck moving on the green hill-side some half a mile above you, and your glasses reveal a huge brown bear which has left his lair rather early in the day to make up for his long winter fast.

You hand over your rifle to your *shikari*, and taking your alpenstock you proceed to lessen the distance between friend Bruin and yourself, and twenty minutes finds you in the next ravine to that in which you last saw the bear and on the same level. Cautiously you top the next spur and peer over, to find him still turning over stones in almost exactly the same spot as when you first set eyes on him.

He is not in the least suspicious, and as the wind is just right and is not likely to give you away, you can make yourself comfortable and amuse yourself watching him through your glasses at under fifty yards, and seeing what he is after. Very deliberately he puts up one massive paw, and getting his long white nails under a stone, turns it over and looks beneath it; this yields nothing and he goes on to the next, but picks

up a mouthful of grass (the wild carrot) *en route.*

The next is a boulder that takes some shifting, and is apparently deeply embedded in the earth, but old Bruin's forearms are equal to a good deal, and he uses both arms this time, gets his claws well under it and pulls towards him, and out comes the stone and goes rolling down the hill from between his legs. This spot seems to cause the bear some anxiety, for he looks at it and then walks off to one side and slowly puts his huge paw over it and lifts up a long, white-looking thing on the tip of one nail, but it is not edible and he drops it and carefully smells the place. This satisfies him, and he sets to work to dig in right earnest, and in a few minutes the whole of his head is out of sight. His hind legs subside under him and he squats down to do the rest of his work, and you can hear deep grunts and heavy breathing emanating from the hole he has made. Suddenly something disturbs him and he pulls his head out with a jerk, gets up on all fours, and with his nose well up in the air, his little beady eyes rolling from side to side in their sockets,

takes stock of the surrounding country and satisfies himself that there is no danger lurking and returns to his digging. He is now, however, alarmed, and hardly has his head disappeared when it is again withdrawn, and this time he sits on his tail, ears cocked and his nose well on the move, but again the wind tells him nothing. He is, however, not quite satisfied, and is distinctly worried about something, but seemingly cannot himself make out what has alarmed him, and he gets away from his hole and starts moving slowly along the hill-side and towards you, so it cannot be you that has anything to do with his suspicions. Suddenly a gust of wind from the back almost blows your hat off and confirms *bhaloo's* worst suspicions, and he stands straight up on his hind legs and looks straight at you with unseeing eyes, and if you mean to be the proud possessor of that lovely coat you have no time to lose, for he will be off in another second. You have already drawn a bead a little to one side on that huge chest and pull the trigger. Over he goes, clean on to his back, then picks himself up and rushes madly down the hill,

but only a few yards are covered ere he tumbles on his head and lies still, to move no more.

To skin him there and then would be a long and tiresome process, so you cut down a few branches of juniper, enough to cover him, and proceed to camp, whence coolies will be sent up to bring him down bodily, while you enjoy a hot cup of tea and feel thoroughly satisfied with your day's *shikar*.

A BEAR, TWO FOOLS AND A DOG

IT was a glorious morning in August, after days of incessant rain. The whole countryside was clothed in the richest of greens, and the forest glades were several feet deep under a profusion of ferns, weeds and grasses, among which bracken predominated. The valleys, in which the snow had lain till late in the year, and in which, not two months ago, might have been seen the trunks of great, gnarled trees, felled by the winter storms, and huge boulders, from which the snow had melted, were now covered with dank vegetation, the wild balsam easily taking the lead.

A broad lane, cut through portions of this green sea of waving weeds, testified to the wanderings of a black bear, and as we followed his tracks we soon discovered the various tit-bits which formed the ingredients of his

breakfast. Soon after taking up the tracks we found a big flat stone moved out of its original position, and where it had previously lain were still to be seen a few ants running hither and thither. Some were carrying little white eggs and larvæ, others, again, rushing aimlessly to and fro with no apparent or particular purpose; one giant among them was struggling with the mutilated remains of a grasshopper's leg, and apparently had not realized that his home had been ransacked by a Hun during his absence. Farther on, a log of wood had been turned over and sharp claws had scratched up the earth at one corner of the grassless patch, which marked the erstwhile position of the log. A sharp prick in a tender portion of the anatomy drove all thought of *bhaloo* and his doings from mind, as, just a few feet beyond the log, he had come across the hive of a small species of jungle wasp, and the infuriated little demons were now ready to avenge his onslaught on their nest on the first moving thing within view. There was nothing for it but to beat a hasty retreat through the thickest and highest portion of the undergrowth to shake them

off, and trust to luck to pick up *bhaloo's* tracks further on. Fortunately the ground was sodden, and no sheep or goats had been in this neighbourhood lately to trample the grass, so *bhaloo's* single path was easily picked up and followed.

He had made his way out of the ravine and into a magnificent old forest of spruce and fir, intermixed with a few old horse chestnuts and oaks, and as it was still early in the morning the chances were that he would move on to some glade, or another ravine, to finish his meal. The Indian corn was not yet ready for him, so he could not satisfy his ravenous appetite quite so easily as he would in another fortnight at the expense of the *zamindar*.

He went steadily forward, and only stopped once to dig down at the root of a tree, but luckily the place was visible from a few yards, and as the position of the hole he had made looked suspicious, it was given a wide berth, and another detour made to join his tracks further on. The old sting still smarted!

The tracks began to go up the hill and rose steadily for about 500 feet, and as the wind

generally blows downhill thus early in the morning there was little chance of his being alarmed, so we followed steadily, yet cautiously. We crossed a spur, and there before us was a lovely glade, some 300 yards long by 50 to 100 yards wide, but no sign of our black friend. There was not a breath of air, and the tree-tops were dead still, yet there appeared to be some movement in a clump of bracken straight ahead. Sure enough it was *bhaloo* forging steadily ahead. A short way from where we could see the movement the bracken gave place to a patch of short, green grass with boulders and stones of every description strewn about, and even from where we were we could see that many of them had been recently turned over, the dark patches of earth alongside each clearly marking the original position. This appeared to be a favourite spot, and old *bhaloo* had met with some measure of success among the ant larvæ and beetles on former occasions, so he was again going to try his luck.

This suited me very well, and we waited patiently until he showed himself, but Togo, the wire-haired terrier, with the smell

of bear at close quarters in his nostrils, had other views on the subject, and it was as much as we could do to restrain him from rushing forward. He had played the game before many and many a time and been in at the death of a score or more, so we knew each other well, and each had confidence in the other. He sat at my feet and shivered, yet it was warm, and I was simply bathed in perspiration, though in quite good condition for hill climbing, and in spite of the altitude it felt quite muggy and oppressively hot.

The bracken waved on and the bear was only a few yards from the edge of it. At last an enormous head emerged, followed by a huge, ungainly body, very long in the leg, but in poor condition, an uncommon occurrence at this period of the year. I watched him turning over the stones, and though it was a fairly easy shot at eighty yards, I preferred getting still nearer, so waited till he reached the top of the rise, and began to work his way down the other side, before we followed. Togo appeared to know that we had seen him, though he could not do so himself, being so

low down among the undergrowth. The bear had just topped the rise, and we moved rapidly but silently forward, until we approached the top, where I took off my hat and peeped cautiously over. I could feel Togo quivering against my leg in a very fever of excitement, but he obediently held back. Suddenly there was a mighty "Wouf," and not two yards from where I stood out dashed the bear from behind a big boulder and fairly hurled himself down the hill. I only just managed to throw up my rifle and pull the trigger before he disappeared into cover with Togo hard on his heels. The shot had been answered by two "Woufs" in quick succession, so I knew that he had been hit, but whether lightly wounded or otherwise remained to be seen. That he was moving at some speed was only too apparent from the rapidity at which Togo's yaps were getting away from us. I climbed up the boulder behind which the bear had been in hiding and was fortunate in getting another glimpse of him tearing down the hill. Two snapshots in rapid succession again made him speak, so one of them had evidently taken effect. We followed as fast as we could,

and soon came upon blood. When we reached the spot where I had got in my second shot, there was no doubt about the hit and the nature of it was only too evident from the tracks. The hind quarters were obviously being dragged, so by a lucky fluke the ball had reached his spine, and we should have had no difficulty in getting him. As it happened, the real difficulty had not, even yet, begun.

Togo's barks still came up to us, "faint from farther distance borne," and in spite of a broken back, the old bear appeared to be making wonderful progress down the steep hill-side.

There was no trouble about finding his tracks now, and we went along pretty fast in the lane made by his great body. Neither was there much danger of his lying in wait for us round some corner and getting us as we approached, as his movements must perforce be very slow, whatever his wish might be. Togo still barked away down the hill somewhere, but we seemed to be getting nearer to him at every step, so the beast must be dead, or, anyway, so we thought!

Arrived at the foot of the ravine we found old Togo sitting on a stone simply shouting to us to hurry. But where was the bear?

Below Togo was a cave, and the tracks led straight into it; as we looked in, in went Togo, and a minute later began barking.

It is a very exceptional bear that will stay in a cave without making some sort of a demonstration when he finds a dog has made its way in, and this was one of the exceptions. It took us half an hour to get Togo out, and all this time not a sound had been elicited from the bear. We felt fairly sure that he had died in the cave, but when dealing with wild animals it behoves one to be particularly cautious. So we decided to make certainty doubly sure, and smoke him to death. All the dry material we could lay our hands on was collected, and with that, together with a few pine cones and fragments from a blue pine, which we were lucky to find fallen not far off, we soon had a blaze, on top of which we piled half-dry leaves and sticks, till the smoke would have done credit to a factory chimney, and this was shovelled into the

mouth of the cave. In a couple of minutes smoke began issuing from a dozen places in various parts of the hill, so we knew it had penetrated every nook and crevice, and must soon dislodge or kill the bear, if he was not already dead. Ten minutes went by, yet not a sound from within. Still we piled on more smoky material, until we ourselves had to quit the spot, as the entire portion of the hill round the cave appeared to vomit clouds of pungent smoke and well-nigh blinded us. It took well over half an hour before the smoke died down, and there could be no doubt or question regarding the bear by now, and he simply *must* be dead. When the cave cooled down a bit, Togo made another entry.

This time he did not remain very long, and came out at the end of a few minutes, feeling the effects of some of the smoke, which evidently still hung about the remoter portions of the cave.

Old Bahadroo, the *shikari*, and I were absolutely convinced by now that the bear was dead, but still I did not quite like the idea of going inside. Bahadroo suggested

making a torch of blue pine wood and going in to see, but this I did not agree to, so being a man of some resource he next suggested leading the way with a torch and that I should follow with the rifle. I still did not exactly jump at the idea, but could not very well show that I was afraid when he was so keen, so rather reluctantly acquiesced, especially when he announced that there was nothing to fear from a *dead* bear!

We had much to learn, and came out of the cave very much scared and muddy men, if not sadder and wiser. Some trouble was taken to select fine resinous bits of wood for the torch, and these were tightly bound together to a pole some four feet long with strands of grass. The torch was lit and we crawled in. The mouth of the cave was small and necessitated our crawling in on our "tummies," but this widened out to quite a palatial residence, in which we could stand up straight quite easily, and the chamber was about eight feet long by three feet broad. Nothing was visible, so we went forward and came across two exits at the extreme end of the front room. Both were extremely narrow, and it

was doubtful if we could work our way in, and wondered how the bear had managed.

The torch revealed the blood-tracks going down one of the narrow passages, which I did not like entering one bit. There was certainly no room to fire over my companion's head if by any chance the bear was alive, and if I took the lead my body would block out all the light, and in the event of a charge I could see nothing to fire at. Togo had been tied up outside, but here was a case where he might prove extremely useful. So placing the torch on the ground, Bahadroo went back for the dog. Down he came like a miniature whirlwind, and without the least hesitation went straight into the opening into which the blood-tracks led.

About ten feet further on the channel turned sharply to the right, and here half of Togo disappeared and made an appalling noise, while the other half (which we could see by the light of the torch) stood as stiff as a poker, with the tail stuck up at an angle of 90 degrees to his back. Bark, bark; yap, yap, for a good ten minutes without stopping, and yet not so much as a groan from the bear.

"He must be dead." We got back Togo with some difficulty, and then Bahadroo threw a flaming bit of wood, and it fell exactly where Togo had stood, glowed for a bit, and then flamed up and burnt itself slowly out. No living bear could have stood such an insult, for judging by Togo's antics the bear must have been within three feet of the spot. Remember, I knew Togo of old, and have already remarked that he had been in at the death of a score or more bears, so knew how close he would go to even a live bear.

More at ease than I had yet been, I let Bahadroo lead the way with a lovely flaming torch, and I followed hard on his heels, and felt Togo, who was not going to be left behind again, clambering about my legs. We were both full stretch on our "tummies," and I told Bahadroo to keep his head well down. Bahadroo must have been about two feet from the corner, behind which we knew the bear to be, when there was a terrific roar, followed by a succession of "Woufs" which might have been a regular barrage of "heavies" from the way the sound boomed and

reverberated in that cave. The roar and the appearance of an enormous black head were simultaneous, and before I had time even to raise my rifle I saw the torch go forward right into the bear's face. What happened after that I don't quite know. I saw glowing fragments of torch flying over me and heard a splutter from old Bahadroo which sounded like *Sahib, bhago,* and as I tried to wriggle backwards (this being the one and only possible means of "bhagoing") something horny and rough smote me with much violence over the face. More stars appeared in that cave than ever I had been acquainted with in the firmament, and before I had quite recovered from the effects I felt the same rough, horny thing brush my cheek again. I grabbed the rifle, muzzle up, with one hand, and felt about with the other for the thing that smote me, quite expecting to feel a great shaggy form, but the only thing it touched was Bahadroo's big toe. I never had even vaguely guessed at the striking power of a hillman's bare foot before this moment. Whether it took us ten minutes to get out of that cave or ten seconds it does not much

matter, nor can I tell, but get out we did, and none the worse for our adventure. The bear had evidently got a little more than he had wanted, and retreated into his pet corner, and whether Bahadroo's hard hoof was to blame, or my ammunition boots, or both, I can't say, but outside the cave I met poor old Togo limping about on three legs, and feeling, generally, tender and badly used altogether.

Anyway, we now knew the exact whereabouts of the old bear, so had no great difficulty in devising means to induce him to leave his stronghold. We got his approximate position from above the cave and set to work to remove various boulders and make a hole above him. This proved simpler than we had anticipated, and the removal of a few rocks and some debris revealed a hole in the hill-side which should lead somewhere near him. A long pole was cut and a torch tied on to the end of it, and let slowly down. Immediately a succession of "Woufs" came from below.

Leaving the torch where it was, Bahadroo caught up Togo, and we took up a position a little to one side of the mouth of the cave,

and a couple of seconds later the huge head appeared in the opening, and remained there with a bullet through the brain.

It took a little time to haul the great carcase out of the narrow opening of the cave, and this done the skin was soon removed and the Two Fools and a Dog wended their weary, but satisfied, way back to camp with the pelt of the bear.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE SARUS

IT is no use calling him disparaging names because he gives himself airs occasionally. Most people would do the same who had the privilege of looking down on their neighbours and wearing royal scarlet on their heads and necks, as His Excellency the Sarus does. There are one or two other things which His Excellency can do that many little boys and girls would give their best penknives or dolls to emulate. He can pick up a very large and fat toad, throw it high in the air and catch it as it falls, and let it slide straight down his throat without even winking an eye over the process. He can stab a fish or a frog, with unerring aim, as it swims past him six inches under water. He can cut the head off a snake and make one mouthful of the rest of it. It is true that sometimes he makes a bad shot and a large rat-snake manages to wind its tail round one

of His Excellency's legs. When this happens he forgets his dignity, hops high into the air on one leg, and swings the other about to get rid of the reptile, while still holding on to its head. But he makes up for his temporary loss of stateliness the moment he has done for the snake and eaten it, by pulling himself up to his four feet odd and just turning his lovely scarlet head the least bit round and letting everybody who is looking see what a very fine fellow he really is. One immediately forgets the past in admiring his present eminence. The snake having reached its destination, His Excellency stalks off to look for another. Each step is made with due deliberation, and as the foot is lifted from the ground and the leg bends, the toes all come together. As the toes near the ground they again open out.

I have just said that one of the occasions on which a sarus drops from his greatness is when a snake wraps itself round his leg, but you will agree that on such occasions it is excusable, and even a King or a Viceroy would probably jump several feet in the air. I have never seen a Viceroy in such a predicament,

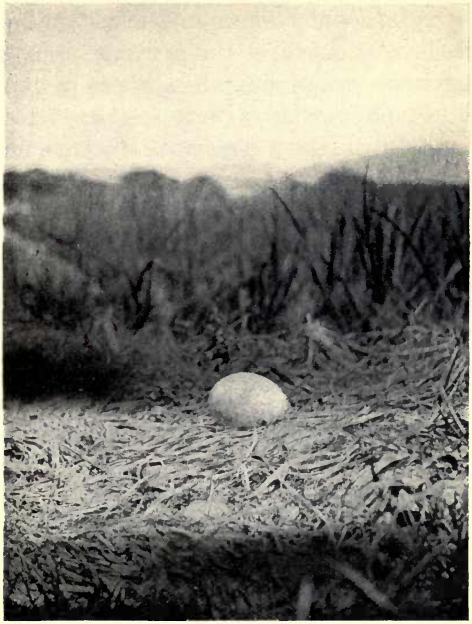
but I feel sure I am right. Another occasion on which the sarus demeans himself—and for this there is no excuse—is when he dances, or, as naturalists call it, "makes a display." But we'll come to that later.

Mr. *Grus antigone*, to give His Excellency the title by which he is commonly known, builds himself a poor thing in the way of nests, but this again is due to his greatness. He despises people who go and hide themselves and their eggs and young ones in a nest, and who waste so much time in collecting material for it. Sometimes, when there is a lot of water about and rushes are close at hand, he will take the trouble to twist them round into a huge platform, often two or three feet high, but as often as not he selects a place on a *bund* dividing two paddy-fields, drops a few bits of straw on it and says to his wife: "That's our home, and you be jolly careful that our eggs don't roll into the water."

Sometimes as many as three eggs are laid, sometimes two, and often only one, but two is the usual number. If the pair are dwellers of paddy-fields it stands to reason that they

are quite accustomed to people wandering about the fields. I have seen a female sarus sitting on her nest within fifteen feet of women weeding. Sometimes the pair put on a very aggressive demeanour when women come too close, and the latter beat a hasty retreat. But as a rule there is a sort of understanding between the bird and the human, and neither pays any attention to the other. The good lady sitting on her eggs makes no attempt to conceal herself, and in fact seems to go out of her way to make herself conspicuous by elongating her already long neck to its utmost. If she sees strange people approaching her nest she watches them carefully until they are within twenty or thirty yards, and then she suddenly ducks her head and makes herself look small, hoping she has not been seen. This is another fall from the sublime to the ridiculous, for no Viceroy would think of trying to look small after he had been caught. That is the time to look big and bluff the other people.

While Her Excellency sits on the eggs, His Excellency is never very far away, and if you ever see only one sarus (in July and



OFTEN ONLY ONE

August) wandering about alone, just cast your eye round and you will be almost sure to find the mate sitting somewhere near, and can then be certain there is a nest. Should another pair arrive on the scene and settle anywhere near the nest, the first pair will go and greet them. The reception accorded by the male to the new-comers is not exactly what you or I would care about. The sarus family all know each other and are prepared for it. The male walks or rather struts forward, closely followed by his better half. When within ten yards or so of the new-comers, who have stood still since they settled, the male begins to arch his long neck, turns his head to one side and lessens the length of his steps. By degrees the long plumes covering the tail begin to rise and he looks as though he meant to make a rush at his rivals, when suddenly the new-comers both rise on tip-toe, stretch their long necks straight up above them and give vent to a succession of short trumpet calls. As suddenly the necks are lowered and bent round in a graceful curve till the beak reaches the root of the tail, and after

a few seconds both, as if acting on some signal, straighten their necks simultaneously and the male gives just one loud call. This appears to be the signal for the other pair to go through an exactly similar performance, and again the male finishes up with a trumpet call. After this both couples regard each other intently for a few seconds and then the heads of both males almost disappear behind their backs, the wings partially open, the primaries drooping on either side of the body, and the long tertial plumes forming a hoop meet over the centre of the back. The full display of the sarus has begun. Each takes a few short mincing steps, heads twisting this way and that, the long wings keeping up a sort of fast-vibrating accompaniment, while the admiring wives stand aside and watch. The display comes to an end as suddenly as it began, and the pairs part company, the brooding female returning to her nest and the male to his interrupted hunt for frogs.

You will naturally ask what happens to his dignity when he makes such a show of himself? Saruses have done it ever since

saruses came into the world, so they don't think it grotesque or undignified and, in fact, the one who can screw in his neck to the greatest degree, take the most mincing steps and throw up his plumes highest is the one who is thought most of among the sarus ladies. A sarus is very seldom seen to run; that, again, is beneath his dignity. If a stranger comes near he will proudly march off in the opposite direction; if you increase your pace he will do the same, and if you can walk faster than he can, or if you break into a run, he will send out a loud trumpet blast, stretch his long neck in front of him, open his long wings, take a sort of hop, skip and jump, and fly off. And as he goes he tells you and every other soul within a mile just exactly what he thinks of you.

A sarus will never demean himself by roaming about the country looking for food for his youngster and then bringing it back and putting it down his throat, like a crow or any other vulgar bird. He makes his young hopeful go out with him soon after it is hatched and look for his own food. The mother picks up a nice toothsome morsel in

the shape of a snail or young frog, gives it a good peck and then drops it at the feet of her little downy son, or daughter, as the case may be, and says, "Here, swallow this," and takes no further interest in the proceedings. In a very few days her children are no trouble to her whatever, and can look out for themselves. If there are two of them they have a really heavenly time, wading about in water up to their ankles, chasing frogs and such-like, and often indulging in a mock battle. For no particular reason, one will suddenly turn round and face the other with all his downy head and neck bristling. The other, not to be outdone, takes up exactly the same pose, and there they stand looking at each other. The body is low to the ground and the neck held out in front, making almost a straight line from the tip of his tail—or what he calls a tail—to the tip of his beak. The down on his head and neck stands erect. Suddenly, No. 1 thinks the better of it, stands up straight, gives a violent peck at nothing, kicks up one skinny leg in the air, as much as to say, "That is what you would have got had you come

any nearer," turns round and runs after Mamma.

The sarus makes a delightful pet, but it is not very safe to keep one if there are any small children about, as when full-grown they become uncertain-tempered and a peck from one is apt to be no pleasant experience, even for a grown-up. As a *choukidar* there is nothing to approach a tame sarus. He will take up his stand in the middle of a lawn, or some other convenient and commanding position, and will blow his trumpet the moment anything moves. Of course, if you are sleeping outside in the hot weather, you must be prepared to be roused up for every jackal or "pi" dog which passes your house, but, after all, you are no worse off than you are with your neighbour's human, or rather inhuman, *choukidar*, who regales you with his unmusical cough and much clearing of his throat, even when there is nothing about.

The sarus pairs for life, and it is said that if one is killed the other dies of a broken heart, but this must be only in the case of a particularly adoring couple, for, as a rule,

the bereaved one will promptly bestir himself and look about for another partner. For the first two or three days he certainly appears to grieve, and his trumpet call will ring over the open plain at intervals as if calling for the lost one, but he is a philosopher and realizes that it is much pleasanter to continue the rest of his life with a new mate than to mope and grieve for the lost one.

The *zamindar* looks upon him as a friend, and though he is not held in any way sacred, he is never molested, and spends his life solemnly striding over fields and stream beds, making short work of all nasty creeping things and letting the entire countryside know where he is, so that all who wish may go and admire his stateliness.

EXTREMES IN SPORT

A BLAZING hot day, with a blistering sun overhead, from which even the little birds had taken shelter among the trees, was one of many which had succeeded each other for nearly a month without a single break. Would a storm never come to bring respite to a parched and half-scorched land? The most energetic and indefatigable tennis players, who had somehow found energy for at least a couple of sets each afternoon, had succumbed to the awful heat and oppression of the last three days, and were content to loll on easy chairs in front of the club and imbibe "*nimboo* pegs."

The old *punkah* coolie, who had pulled this very *punkah* for the better part of half a century, sat a little way behind, with his head between his knees, listlessly transferring the thong from one hand to the

other, and occasionally gripping it between his toes, until some irate club member shook him out of his dreams by violently pulling the *punkah* frill. Two district officials sat in one corner, with glasses on the table beside them and long cheroots held between their fingers, and discussed the possibilities of a famine if rain did not come speedily.

Some fifty miles from the little station conditions were equally trying. Mynahs could be seen hunting for insects among a herd of cattle, their wings hanging down on each side and their mouths wide open. A solitary drongo sat on a bush overlooking a filthy green and brown puddle (in the middle of which reposed a huge black buffalo), also with his mouth wide open. Two little children in charge of the cattle sat in the shade of a giant tree too listless even to play.

A little distance from the village a tiger had killed a bullock, but had not been able to drag it into the jungle, having been driven off by the villagers before the animal was quite dead. The sun shone directly on the carcase, and a couple of crows, one pecking at the

glazed eye and the other at the wound in the neck, made by the long canines of the tiger, were the only living things to be seen. The sun sank lower in the horizon and finally disappeared from view while still some distance from its accustomed setting place. Could it be a bank of cloud, or is it merely dust haze which had been getting thicker and thicker each day?

The line appears to be irregular and dark, and, yes, there can be no doubt about it, the long looked-for clouds had at last arrived, and surely rain would come within the next few hours.

It was still as death, and not a breath of air stirred the tree-tops. Mosquitoes and midges, those pests of the forests, were conspicuous by their absence, which was something to be thankful for. Even they would have been preferable to this awful stillness and heat. A drop of perspiration stood out on my temple and ran down my cheek, while my head and temples felt as though they supported a tremendous weight. Was it worth it, even for a tiger?

The crows were still busy, and one had

made some impression in the thick hide and was making up for lost time. Suddenly they both flew up into a tree and after sitting there for a few minutes one of them again came down and alighted on the bullock's head, and almost immediately flew up again into the tree. The dead leaves which strewed the ground were as dry as tinder and crackled like shots out of a child's toy pistol at every movement, and would very soon betray the advent of even a feline. Half a dozen crows, making their way to their nightly roosting haunts, suddenly stopped in their course and circled over a tree, at the foot of a knoll, some 200 yards away, cawing excitedly the while. The two that had been on the carcase flew off hurriedly and joined them, and a little later the whole lot flew away. Some minutes later another lot arrived and were passing over the spot when the rearmost straggler turned, cawed, and sat on the tree. This was the signal for the remainder to return, and once more crows cawed excitedly and circled round and round, anathematizing something on the

ground below. Obviously this was the resting-place which "Stripes" had chosen for the day, and it was now time for him to be on the move and partake of his feast. The crows had vanished, and once again silence reigned, when a crackling among the leaves some distance away attracted my attention.

"Crunch, crunch, crunch," at regular intervals, followed by a momentary silence, which was again followed by a regular volley of "crunches" in quick succession. Again silence, and after a short interval "crunch, crunch" again at regular intervals, and approaching nearer every instant. It certainly was not a feline, but what on earth could it be?

Eyes and ears were strained to the uttermost and expectancy ran high, when hopes were dashed to the ground on the arrival of an old pea-hen. It saw the kill, craned its neck to the full, looked intently and then took fright and with a succession of "honk kuk-kuk-kuks," ending up with a sort of cat-call, she rose and vanished over the tree-tops. The next arrivals were a pair of jackals, who sat on a village path some fifty yards

from the kill. The breeze, what little there was, blew from the hills to them, and told of a feast in store, even though it also carried a more sinister odour. One got up, and after looking round in every direction stealthily walked round to reconnoitre the position. The other one appeared to be satisfied that all was well, and came boldly forward until within twenty yards of the kill, when his courage failed him, and he stood with ears twitching backwards and forwards. The first one joined him, and together they moved forward very cautiously, looking hither and thither, their eyes and noses open to every sight and smell.

It had taken them the better part of ten minutes to come the fifty yards, but at last they stood within a few feet of the feast.

One stealthily moved a step forward, and bending over caught the bullock's ear and gave it a violent shake; then, as though awe-inspired at his own temerity, he turned and fled. Finding nothing chased him, and his companion still standing where he had left him, he returned and stood beside him. A crackle of leaves in the distance transformed

them both into statues with ears cocked forward and eyes staring into the brushwood beyond. One began to back, with eyes still fixed before him and head moving up and down and from side to side, to have a better look at the intruder. The other one had stood immovable. I, too, had heard a distant "crunching" among the leaves, but in the opposite direction to that in which the crows had indicated the tiger to be, so could this be some other prowling beast, or had the tiger, too, gone to reconnoitre the position before approaching a kill which he knew only too well was not in as thick cover as he could have wished? "Pheaw," echoed through the forest, "pheaw, phe-phe-pheaw," as the two jackals raced off together in the opposite direction, their warning cry penetrating far into the jungles.

Their scampering footfalls among the dead leaves had long ceased to be heard, and the "pheaw" now came at longer intervals from the direction of the village fields.

"Crunch, crunch, crunch." Silence. Again "crunch, crunch, crunch," and again silence. Very slow and very deliberate, and one could

have counted two between each of the "crunches," but they came no nearer. What with the stifling heat and the excitement and strain, I felt a regular cascade pouring down my back. A drop of perspiration went into my eye and began to smart, yet I dare not raise my hand to wipe the offending member. "Crunch, crunch, crunch," on went the measured tread. The jackals had taken fright at something away to my right, and that is the direction whence I had first heard the foot-fall, but now it worked round to directly in front of me, yet came no nearer than it was at first. Hours seemed to pass as I listened, and strained my eyes trying to catch a glimpse among the foliage and the scrub. He had made almost a complete circle and had got round behind me, but not a single yard nearer was he to the kill. My rifle rested on a forked twig before me, ready aligned on the kill, and I cast my eye down the barrel, over the sights, and on to the kill, and, alas, could only just make it out. Three minutes, and it would be too dark. However, I consoled myself with the thought that the tiger, being much lighter in colour, would

show up for some time longer than would the black bullock. A distant and ominous roar broke the stillness, and my wet clothes for the first time began to feel chilly against my body. The roar became louder, and the trees began to sway gently in the rising breeze. Without further warning the storm was on us. A hurricane raged through the forest, bending the trees to breaking point, the lightning came in blinding flashes, and the thunder followed in deafening peals, and a real tropical downpour soaked me through and through before I could clamber out of my *machán*. I got down somehow, in the dark, with my rifle, and beat a hurried, ignominious retreat into the village and permitted the old tiger to enjoy his dinner in peace.

. . . . .

The jungle was of another type, the scenery absolutely different, and instead of the oppressive heat I was clad in furs and thick gloves, and "Gilgit boots" encased my legs and feet. The snow lay deep in the valleys, and a cutting wind which threatened to freeze every portion of the face which

the "balaclava" did not cover, howled down the hill. A kill lay before me, but was very different to the one I had sat over in the heat. It had been found by accident by one of my men, and was a *burrhel* ram, in its prime, with a fair set of horns. The tracks in the snow around showed that a panther had done the deed, but whether that *rara avis* the ounce (snow-leopard) or an ordinary one, it was, of course, not possible to tell. They are both to be found in these hills, and even if not very probable the possibility existed, and the chance was good enough to make most men undergo a considerable amount of discomfort to secure so coveted a prize.

We were well above the belt of trees, and here only juniper and a little prickly shrub, with here and there some very stunted and deformed rhododendrons, appear to weather the winter storms which howl round these desolate and inhospitable slopes. There was not a village nor sign of habitation within miles, and my own camp was some two miles, with several intervening spurs and gorges,

DESOLATE AND INHOSPITABLE

away, so there was nothing to frighten the feline, and every possibility of his paying his kill an early visit. The extraordinary thing was that he had not eaten any of it so far. The man who found it informed me that it was not fresh when he came upon it, and must have lain there some hours as it was perfectly stiff, so what had frightened the brute off it in the first instance?

There was plenty of life all round, and cheery little bird voices were audible in every direction. A flock of merry, red-billed choughs circled overhead in the blue sky, stooping at each other in play, and a number of snow-pigeons rose every now and again from among the rocks in the ravine, and after circling round aimlessly once or twice sat down in the same spot. A hardy little wren hopped about among the bushes within a few feet of the kill, and a mouse-hare peeped out from behind a big boulder, sat up on his tailless haunches, and attended to his toilet with his forepaws. A redstart flitted from rock to rock near the water's edge, raising and depressing its tail at frequent

intervals, and an upland buzzard circled overhead in the clear, blue sky.

The ubiquitous jungle crow had arrived and spotted the kill, and his presence would very soon attract a Himalayan griffon or a lammergeyer to the feast, and if the panther or the snow-leopard, whichever was the rightful owner, was within seeing distance, might also have the effect of bringing him. My concealment was perfect, and what is more had existed for ages, so I had nothing to do but to get in, and, of course, there was nothing to make the panther suspicious—a cave under a huge rock, with a lot of juniper growing in front. Plenty of room to move about, and anything inside practically invisible, owing to the deep shadow and the bushes in front, except from within three or four feet.

The sun had left our side of the hill some hours ago, although it was still early in the afternoon. A miniature landslip up the opposite side of the hill attracted my attention, and following the direction whence came the stones I saw a red bear feeding.

Slowly and deliberately he went from

stone to stone and turned them over, one by one, for grubs. It was this turning over of stones which had started the landslip. Browsing, turning over stones, digging, as the mood seized him, he moved slowly round the corner, and I lost sight of him. The crow had been busy for some little time, but no vultures or lammergeyer had so far put in an appearance. Suddenly, "Lip-ya, lip-ya," came the call of the Himalayan snow-cock, and a great whir of wings told me they had been disturbed. But by what? It might be a little fox, or it might be the panther on the move. A bird of prey would merely make them take cover and sit tight, a bear coming near would probably make them call, but not fly, so my hopes began to rise. I looked across at the old crow and found he had flown up on to a rock, having enjoyed a good meal, and was busy cleaning his beak against the rock. He obviously had seen nothing to worry about, and two minutes later he flew off, still unconcerned. Half an hour went by, and in spite of my heavy clothing I was beginning to feel chilled to the bone, and argued to myself as to the

advisability of giving it up. Since he had not eaten his kill when he first got it, nor approached it throughout the day, and in such a lonely part, it seemed very probable that he would not come again, and—but there he is. Without a sound of any kind he had arrived somehow from the very bowels of the earth and now stood beside the dead sheep. I watched and admired. There was plenty of time to shoot and, like an idiot, I had forgotten and left my camera with my *shikari*. An opportunity like this for a photo would not come again in a hurry. Distance not fifteen feet, and light perfect for a fifth of a second exposure. He stood looking at the kill for a few seconds, then picked up a hind leg of the sheep in his mouth and gave it a violent shake, and then dropped it. He then walked round it, sat down alongside the hind quarters and gave another shake, and then went to business. Placing a forefoot on the leg, he embedded his teeth deep into the flank and tore the skin upwards, and then began to "lick" the skin off the body with his tongue, assisting the operation with a tug with his teeth.

I was getting most interested in the process, and prepared to sit it out to the end, but the unforeseen always seems to happen in the jungles. Rocks came hurtling down the hill-side, and the panther stood up to look, and then suddenly slunk down low behind the sheep. The chance was too good to be lost, and he was obviously startled and might disappear, as he had come, any moment. So I drew a bead and fired. He never so much as moved his position, and lay stone dead with a bullet through his skull. A small panther, blessed with a beautiful coat, I never discovered the reason of his alarm, and can only attribute it to a fleeting glimpse of the bear getting behind some stone or depression, in which the panther had not seen enough to recognize what it was, and a panther's instincts and training leave nothing to chance.

The first thing to be done was to light a fire, and my men, hearing the shot, soon arrived on the scene from an adjoining *nullah*, and were only too thankful, like myself, to hustle about and collect juniper and get the circulation going again. The fire lit, we sat

round it for a bit and then set to work to skin the panther, and that done wended our way back to camp, not with a lovely snow-leopard skin, as I had hoped, but still with something to show for our excursion.

WHAT "SHIKARIS" DON'T KNOW ABOUT BEARS

IT is really extraordinary how little those fiendish enemies of ours know about our ways, and that is perhaps just as well, for what with their newfangled guns and rifles that can kill at longer distances than we can even see, we should have a poor look-out if they were better acquainted with our habits.

Even among the class of men, such as shepherds, or *gujars* — buffalo herdsmen, who live half the year in our very midst, and native *shikaris*, who make a business of knowing all about us, one hears extraordinary tales. Often I have come upon an encampment in the forest, at night, and while quite invisible myself, in the dark shadows of the trees, have watched and listened and heard men make some alarmingly inaccurate statements about our kind.

Frequently I have heard it said that the black Himalayan bear is short-sighted and hard of hearing, and that when wounded he plugs the wound with mud and leaves to stop the bleeding! Did one ever hear such rubbish? We have got as good eyes and ears as most jungle folk, and when really expecting danger can use them to some purpose, but life would not be worth living if we had to be constantly on the qui vive apprehending danger; so we seldom take the trouble of looking miles ahead to see if anyone is approaching, or listening to the crack of a twig and putting it down to a human footfall.

Even if it is a human being, it's a hundred to one it is only a woodcutter, or women collecting herbs, and who cares a fig for them? If they happen to be coming straight on to my lair and there are three or four of them, I slip away, but if passing some distance above or below I lie still and let them pass. It has happened that a silly idiot cutting grass has worked up from below to within a few yards of me, and then when standing up to stretch his back has seen me. Under

the circumstances there is no knowing what he might do—run home and tell someone with a gun, perhaps—so it is as well to teach him a lesson. So I have got up, rushed into him and given him a couple of little pats on the head and face and then changed my quarters, for there is sure to be a hue and cry. Men really are such babies, and make a fearful fuss about a little scratch!

All white men whom I have heard talking seem to respect our powers of scent, and with reason, for that often tells us the sort of man we have to deal with long before we have seen him, and if we get the sniff of a white man it usually means rifle bullets, so we make ourselves scarce. Even white men often make one curious mistake about attending to the wind, though, mind you, they think they are doing it all the time. For instance, a man sees one of our kind feeding on the top of a ridge, and the wind is blowing up-hill or even across the hill, from the *nullah* to the ridge. He sees there are innumerable small *nullahs* running down from the ridge and joining the main big one from the bottom of which he has seen the bear.

He then finds the wind blowing across and thinks he can easily go up one of the small *nullahs*, which will bring him out on the ridge some distance below the bear, and since the wind is blowing across he will be safe. But that is where he makes the mistake, forgetting that a similar current is blowing from the *nullah* on the other side of the ridge, and that the two will meet on the top and race along the spur and then, of course, we get the wind at once and are off. Of course, he should have worked up the main *nullah*, and on the other slope, till well above, and then round. It's longer, but surer.

These are little everyday things we learn from experience when still with our mothers, and as we stay with her for two whole summers we have learnt a good deal of jungle lore ere we go out into the world to forage for ourselves.

The greatest curse we have to be careful of is a well-organized beat, and though I have once or twice got through by charging back on the beaters, this is almost as dangerous as going forward, for sometimes *shikaris* also carry firearms, and as the beat is generally

down-hill, it means we have to charge up, which gives those above every advantage, and us none, so to charge back we have to take the nature of the ground into consideration.

Except for these little dangers, which, after all, rather add to the charm of our otherwise uneventful existence, we bears, on the whole, spend a very pleasant life. Of course, there are times of the year when we have our work cut out to feed ourselves, but on the whole there is no lack of food in the jungle.

The happiest time of our life is, perhaps, that which we spend with our mother. There are generally two cubs, and we spend the time playing or sleeping, with never a care or worry. Born about February or March, we are blind for about a fortnight, and don't attempt to leave our cave till about six weeks to two months old, except when mother takes us out to the mouth of it and deposits us in the sun of a morning.

Then for the whole of that summer we remain with her, and when the apricots are ripe near the villages, make raids on them at night, and during the day lie up in the

thickest part of the jungle we can find, in a dense deodar nursery for choice. Sometimes mother succeeds in killing a goat or a sheep that has strayed from a flock, and not infrequently a big cow, much bigger than herself, and we all take to a meat diet by way of a change. At this time of year there are also plenty of wild fruits in the jungle, such as strawberries, and no lack of luscious herbs and grasses which keep us going between the time when apricots are over and the Indian corn still unripe. Then in August comes the Indian corn, which is lovely and juicy, and quite irresistible.

Men spend the night shouting and howling in the fields beside big bonfires, and send their dogs in after us, and it's great sport being driven by men with torches from one field, to go into another and snatch a few mouthfuls there, and ruin about three times as much as we eat. Immediately after the Indian corn comes the crop they call *phoolan*, the flower of which is red, and when ripe becomes a dark brown or black. It's a sort of millet, and though not so nice as the former, is still quite good.

By the time this is over the grass on the hill-tops, too, is dying with the cold, and we have to do a good deal of digging for roots and especially for the long white worm, with a red head, which we find under dead and fallen trees, and which is by no means to be despised, and is quite as good as the eggs and larvæ of ants. Honey, of course, we never miss a chance of getting at. All this time we youngsters notice that mother will never allow a big male bear to come near. Either we have to run, or he has, but we never feed together, or even on the same hill-side.

As the weather gets cold and food scarce we make our way down the hill to the oak forests at lower altitudes, and from the end of November to January live chiefly on acorns, and when they become scarce, eat the bark of the deodar saplings, and later on the flowers of the rhododendron and a little blackberry, which is very prolific and not at all bad. Of course, by the time we are eighteen months old we can fend for ourselves more or less, and mother is not quite so mindful of us, and we frequently wander off long distances from her, though keeping within

hail. We also notice that this summer mother is not so particular about running away from or driving away other bears that arrive on the scene, and is quite willing to feed in the company of a big male. But we don't like his looks, so keep away, but it is only during the summer months, i.e. before the Indian corn crop comes in, that mother has anything to do with male bears.

About November, when we go into the oak forests, she begins getting unkind to us, and gradually turns us away altogether to forage for ourselves, and by then, of course, we are no longer helpless cubs. From now on, one year is very like another, and an occasional beat or a gunshot in a field are the little excitements which break the *ennui* of our easy-going, not to say monotonous, existence.

In conclusion, I may add that it is a mistake to say we live in caves. Of course, we all have our pet caves, into which we can go in time of danger, but as a rule we sleep out in the open at the root of some giant fir or pine, or if flies get very troublesome, we go into dense scrub jungle, but very seldom into caves except in winter. Our down-country

cousins, the sloth-bears, I have heard from some bears who have been in the plains and met them, live in caves, but from all accounts of their long, shaggy coats and elongated, ugly snouts and long, white claws, they must be a poor lot altogether, and don't count for much.

A NIGHT ATTACK

A DEEP ghostly silence broods over all. Not a sound; not even a fitful breeze rustles the leaves, and yet you are surrounded by life. Just then you can see nothing, you can hear nothing, and even the crickets have forgotten to chirrup; but you can feel that you are not alone. As the minutes pass you think you must be mistaken, but you cannot rid yourself of the feeling, a sort of presentiment that all is not well, and a cold shiver runs down your back.

The time: what does time matter? It might be the witching hour of midnight, when shrouded ghosts are on the move, and the very thought makes you see ghoul-like shapes flitting among the trees; or it might be that silent hour before the dawn, when the night hunters are busy in the fields, looking for a last tit-bit, before they lie up for the day and

just before the birds awake; it probably is the latter, but time is of no account here and only light or darkness matters.

A stealthy footfall away to the right, and you listen and listen and strain your eyes to see movement in the shadows, but they pass away, and you have seen nothing, and are feeling more uncomfortable than ever.

You look up and see a faint moon, which you have to crane your neck to see, and before you and below, a vast sea of tree-tops reaches away into infinity, and you appear to be the only atom in this vast, limitless expanse. It is not cold, but you shiver once more at your utter loneliness. You look down on the seat beside you and find your trusty rifle there, and for once feel assured, but only for a second, as a gruesome picture passes through your mind of undefined forms passing beneath you; forms which you feel no rifle ever made could harm, and they silently pass into the darkness whence they came, to haunt you with their memory.

While you try to compose yourself, another form glides past, but you welcome him with joy as something tangible, a friend in

this hour of your need. He has not seen you, and has gone into the branches of a tree close to you. Suddenly the silence is broken, and away over the forest echoes the "hoo-hoo-hoo-o" of the great "night-hunter." "Hoo-hoo," comes the reply from yonder far-off knoll.

All is still again. Still, ye gods! It is stiller, and more oppressive than it has ever been. The awful silence hurts. You can feel it; you could cut it, it is so dense, and you feel you want to shout, to scream, say something, do something — anything, but somehow nothing is done, and you simply sit on, growing colder than ever.

What on earth is the matter? You have spent many a lonely night in the forests, and apart from the glorious, indescribable feeling of being alone with the mighty denizens of the forest and with nature, which sets your pulses beating with expectancy and the excitement of the hour, you have never felt like this before.

The worst of it is there is nothing to account for it; neither sight nor sound that you can fix on or blame for it, and there seems to be

nothing that you can do to remove it. Your pet rifle that has accompanied you on many memorable occasions, and seen you out of more than one tight corner, now gives you no confidence, and you cannot shake off the unreasonable dread that it is at last going to play you false, this time, and will not go off when " IT " arrives.

What on earth are you sitting here for? There is no kill beneath you, no salt-lick, and not even a water-hole, so far as you can see: so what can have brought you here?

" Oungh-Aoungh-A Aoungh-ghurrrrrr "—Good heavens! It seemed to come out of your very boots. There is no mistaking "Stripes" when he chooses to lift his voice. Ordinarily you would have been thrilled through and through, and slowly cocked your triggers at the first sound, and peered cautiously over the edge of the *machán*, but now you only shiver once more. Anyway, where are you?

There is no *machán* and no fringe of leaves or screen to shield you from those all-seeing eyes; and what on earth is your rifle doing there, hanging by its trigger-guard

from a thin branch which is on the point of breaking? and what is more, it is almost out of reach, and to get it you must shake the entire tree.

"Aoungh," then silence, and you look down to see two deep red balls of light fixed straight on you. Can he jump this height? Why, you are hardly ten feet off the ground, and he could reach you by standing on his hind legs. You felt sure that rifle was going to play you false at last, and there it is hanging just out of reach.

This must be the "IT" that has made you feel uncomfortable all this time. Those red balls come nearer and you prepare to shriek, but you cannot open your parched lips, you cannot move hand or foot. You feel the perspiration standing out in great drops on your forehead and running in cascades down your back. You again think of the rifle and wonder if you could make an effort to reach it, but you instinctively feel that the slightest movement on your part will be your last, and the moment your eye is off him he will be on you. You think of a little penknife in your trouser pocket,

but you cannot remember on which side it is, and, anyway, what good will it do? The moments seem like hours, and why won't he spring and have done with it? Should you throw yourself down to him and settle matters that way? He moves forward another step and three short yards divide you—his own too short a length! You can see his whole head, and those eyes seem to light up his grey-white whiskers, but not a muscle moves and those eyes of his won't even blink. My God! He is below the tree now, and two feet divide his mouth from your feet. You make a last effort to pull them up, and feel him stand up, and one gigantic paw goes across your thigh. You feel his stiff whiskers rub against your bared arm, and you feel it is all over and——

"Sahib, Sahib!"

"Oh, what on earth is happening?"

"Nothing, dear, only *chota-hazri* is at the door."

"What *did* we have for dinner last night? Do you remember?"

GLOSSARY

Backshish.—A tip, *douceur.*

Bhago (v. *bhagna*).—Run (to run).

Bhaloo.—Usually a black bear, but often applied to the genus generally.

Bund.—A bank or division between two flooded fields.

Burrhel or *Bharal.*—A blue Wild Sheep (*Ovis nahura*).

Chaprassi.—A peon.

Cherág.—An earthenware oil dip.

Chinkara.—The Indian Gazelle, ravine deer (*Gazella bennetti*).

Chir (pine).—*Pinus longifolia.*

Chota-hazri.—Literally a small breakfast; early morning tea and toast.

Choukidar.—A watchman.

Chuppattie.—A round flat cake of unleavened bread.

Dungshoorish.—A name for the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysætus*) in the Simla Hills, Bushahr State. Literally a "monal tiger," or killer of monal pheasants.

Faquir.—A religious mendicant (really a Mahomedan, but laxly applied to all kinds).

Gaur.—The Indian Bison (*Bos gaurus*).

Gilgit boots.—Long felt boots reaching to above the knees.

Jungli (really *Jhangli*).—*Jungli* means wild, of the jungle, but in this case is applied to the people of the Jhang District, Punjab.

Kail (pine).—*Pinus excelsa.*

Kali Mai ka suppur.—The cliff of the Goddess Kali.
Kaptan.—Captain. (Porsit may be for Fawcett or Forsyth.)
"King-crow."—The name by which the Drongo (*Dicrurus ater*) is known to Europeans from his habit of attacking crows.
Kotwal.—A subordinate Police official (a complimentary title in the hills).
Kurnail.—Colonel. (Jarn is the Indianized version of John.)
Machan.—A stage or platform fixed on a tree or on poles.
Mahout.—The man who looks after and drives an elephant.
Maidán.—An open plain.
"Matey."—A cook's assistant.
Nimboo (peg).—Lime (lime-juice pegs).
Nullah or *nalla.*—A ravine, valley, bed of a stream.
"Point."—A term used in falconry to denote the highest pitch to which a falcon will rise following a dive or "stoop" at her quarry.
Punkah (coolie).—A fan (the man who pulls the fan).
Ryots.—Peasants, agriculturists.
Sadhu.—A religious mendicant (Hindu).
Shikari.—A sportsman.
Tahr or *tehr.*—A Himalayan Wild Goat (*Hemitragus jemlaicus*).
"Tiercel."—The male of a falcon. (From *tierce* a third, a male being much smaller than the female among birds of prey).
Zamindar or *zemindar.*—A landowner, peasant, agriculturist.